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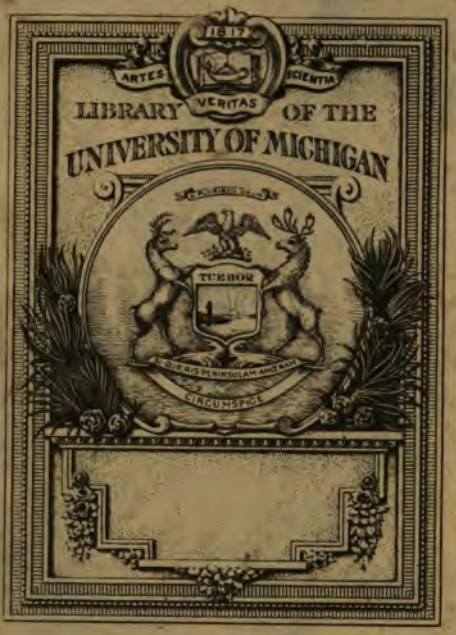
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TOUR

THROUGH THE

BRITISH WEST INDIES.

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THROUGH THE

BRITISH WEST INDIES,

IN THE YEARS 1802 AND 1803,

GIVING A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT

OF

THE BAHAMA ISLANDS.

BY DANIEL McKINNEN, ESQ.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. WHITE, HORACE'S HEAD, FLEET STREET;

BY R. TAYLOR, BLACK-HORSE-COURT.

1804.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL NUGENT,

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR OF THE ISLAND

OF JAMAICA,

COMMANDER IN CHIEF

OF HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES

IN THAT ISLAND, ETC.

AS A TESTIMONY OF FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT

FOR HIS JUST, LIBERAL,

AND TRULY DISINTERESTED CHARACTER,

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE first part of this Tour was composed in the island of Jamaica, from notes intended rather as familiar communications to a friend than for the deliberate purpose of a future publication. The author, who had been a very cursory observer, could hardly presume to add any thing to what has been written on subjects of such importance and extent as our valuable Sugar Islands in the West Indies; and a general history* of great respectability has not long since been published, embracing every object of any importance respecting the island of Jamaica. On passing through the Bahamas, however, pleased by the agreeable climate they afford, the author was induced to make a short stay, and avail himself of the opportunity of visiting such of the islands

* By Mr. Edwards.

as seemed more particularly to deserve attention. His observations were at first intended to have been addressed in a letter to the distinguished character to whom the work is now dedicated, and to whom it was known that topographical communications would be grateful; but the novelty of the subject inviting a fuller examination than was first contemplated, has led to the little volume now offered to the public. As the topics to which the first chapters of the work relate are not altogether trite, they may afford some amusement to the general reader; but the observations of a traveller can add little to the information of those who have made the same countries their residence or study. The principal study of the author has been accuracy of representation: yet he is deeply conscious how remote he may be found from the exactness of truth, whilst attempting on a first impression to delineate objects so replete with novelty and interest.

Binfield,
March 1804.

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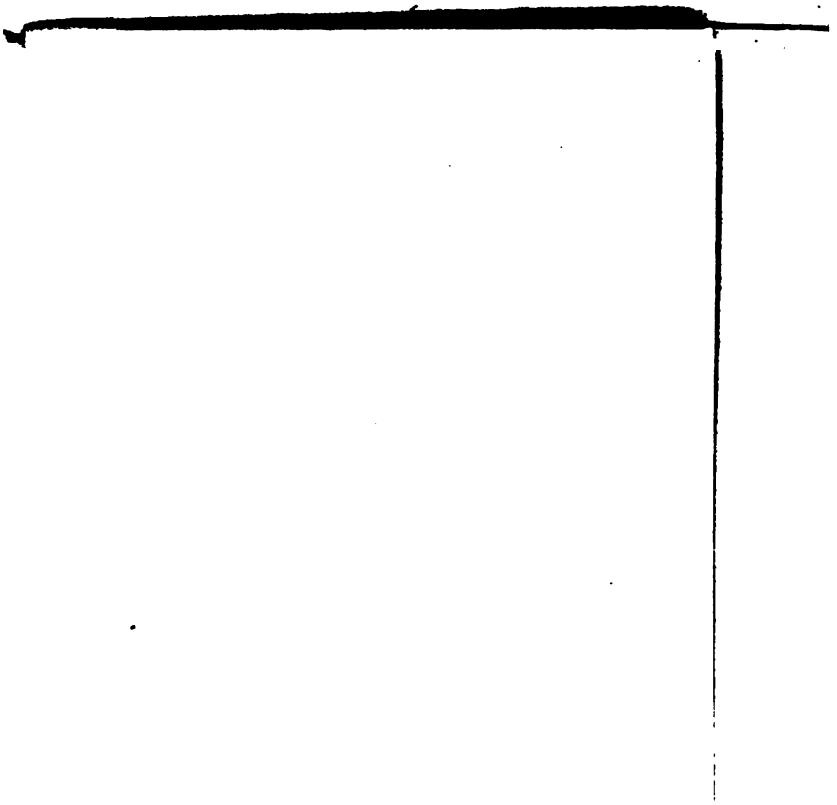

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THROUGH THE

BRITISH WEST INDIES.

CHAPTER I.

Passage from England to Barbadoes.—Bridge Town.—Character of the scenery of Barbadoes.—Short historical notice and general view of the island in its present state.

In the summer of the year 1802, I embarked on my passage from England to the West Indies. The hurricane season having commenced, I was anxious to observe all the appearances and changes in the state of the atmosphere in the southern part of my voyage. Between Madeira and the Azores, a little before the equinox, we experienced a severe gale of wind from the south, which gradually veered with increasing violence to the north-east, and carried us within the tropic. This I believe is not an unusual course

of the high winds in the south part of the northern hemisphere ; but having observed through a considerable extent of the Atlantic Ocean to the northward an opposite tendency of the gales (from S. E. to N. W.) about the hurricane season, the difference in this latitude will be attributed to the indraught of air from the north, which receives an apparent easterly direction from the increased velocity of the earth's motion at its surface, and the diurnal progression of the sun's influence from east to west. The thermometer rose gradually from 70 to 75 ; and the atmosphere as we coasted the Canary Islands was remarkably light and transparent, the sky during the prevalence of the north-eastern wind being dappled with white fleecy clouds ; but as the trade-wind occasionally changed to the east, or east inclining south, the air underwent a sensible alteration, and the clouds became heavy, letting fall continually as they passed us successive torrents of rain. In one or two instances after gaining the

the tropic we were visited by light winds from the north-west, rarely occurring except at this season; but during which, although the delay was mortifying and unexpected, we enjoyed a pure and fine atmosphere. Notwithstanding the air in the lower regions generally came from the east, I observed an upper stratum of thin clouds continually moving from the westward. Hence it has been inferred that the trade-wind is confined to the lower range of the atmosphere, whilst in the more elevated an opposite current of air predominates. On the highest mountains in the West Indies it has been found that a westerly breeze will sometimes prevail in direct opposition to the current of air beneath.

The atmosphere within the tropics to some constitutions is remarkably grateful. I was informed by a fellow-passenger, who had taken this voyage a few years before with a young person labouring under a severe pulmonic affection, which had confined him all the early part of the passage to his bed, that

on approaching the tropic he appeared, as it were, suddenly to awake from a painful dream, and with extravagant signs of joy ran about the deck, exclaiming that an oppressive load had been taken from his head. Nor is this wonderful; for I believe it has been found that at certain seasons of the year the weight of air within the tropic does not exceed one-half of that within the polar region. The changes, however, in the state of the atmosphere, though not always visible, are certainly very sensible and frequent, affecting the more nervous with alternate depression and elevation of spirits. From the vicinity of the Cape de Verd Islands to Barbadoes the climate continued nearly the same, and such as I afterwards found it in the West Indies.

Our first notice of the approach of land was the fragrant and aromatic smell of the continent of South America (or of the islands in its vicinity), which we sensibly perceived as a squall came from that quarter, and one

of

of the boobies, flying round the ship, perched amongst the rigging, and suffered himself to be taken with apparent indifference. On the same day innumerable flights of small flying-fish rose on each side of the ship's bows from the water. The larger sort of this fish is seen every where in the warm latitudes, but the diminutive kind abounds particularly to the eastward of Barbadoes. The negroes take them after the example of the Charaibs very successfully in the dark:—they spread, I was told, their nets before a light, and disturb the water at a small distance: the fish rising eagerly fly towards the light, and are intercepted by the nets. Early in the morning we perceived the hazy low land of Barbadoes from the deck, and in a few hours came within a distinct view of the objects on the southern shore.

This little island, which consists of something more than 100,000 acres of land, lies the furthest of all our West Indian colonies to windward. It swells gradually in the interior

terior towards the north-east and north, and is elevated on a ridge of calcareous rock which rises from about 30 to 50 feet or more above the level of the beach, and forms a sort of promontory round the north-eastern part of the island. The coast, wherever I had an opportunity of observing it, is lined with white coral, and the strand is of a beautiful light and soft sand, composed apparently of the pulverized rock and marine exuviæ. At a distance the land appeared extremely bare; but as we approached it more nearly the rich and curious tropical productions captivated our eyes. On the hills the stately cabbage-trees, and on the beach the cocoa-nuts spreading their feathered branches, afforded a picture of which I had not formed too lively a conception from the representation of others, and to which the painter only can do adequate justice.

We passed round *Charles Fort* and the Castle, which stands on an eminence at St. Anne, and came to anchor in *Carlisle Bay*,

opposite to Bridge Town. It can hardly be worth while to enter into a minute description of an island which has been so completely and accurately surveyed in every point of view as Barbadoes; I shall therefore presume to offer only some cursory and general remarks, more particularly as to the beauty and character of its scenery.

Barbadoes must always be a very important station in the Windward Islands, as it is the most prominent point to the eastward of all our insular possessions, which lie in the form of a semicircle in the American Archipelago, from north to south, and consequently are most accessible from that island which is the furthest advanced to windward. Two packets are regularly sent out in every month from England, and their arrival is announced by a flag hoisted at the Castle. The first dispatched in every month touches here on her voyage to Jamaica, and thence back through the Bahama Islands; the other on her passage

sage through the Charibbean Islands to Dominica, Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, and Tortola—vessels which I think may be justly recommended as affording the most commodious, faithful, and expeditious conveyance ever yet known on such extensive seas. The mails for the respective Charibbean Islands, which are not delivered by the packets, are taken up by small schooners or mail boats which await their arrival, and carry them immediately to their places of destination. Bridge Town is also a point at which the slave ships from the coast of Africa, and vessels from the northern continent of America, usually touch to learn the state of the markets in the different ports to leeward. Hence the harbour in Carlisle Bay exhibits a constant scene of activity and commerce, even at those seasons of the year when the shipping employed in the immediate traffic of the island is less concerned.

I observed as we entered the harbour a Guinea

a Guinea ship at a small distance with a cargo of newly arrived slaves, who crowded to look through the port-holes, and hailed the sight of land with a chorus of wild and joyful music, which was singularly affecting to persons who knew how to sympathize with them in their emotions. I was present afterwards as a number of them landed and paraded the streets two by two. There was certainly nothing in their looks that indicated despondence or apprehension: on the contrary, they were well pleased, and seemed to anticipate an agreeable change of situation. The ship which brought them over was clean and well ventilated; and they were treated with apparent mildness. Much as every benevolent mind may feel for the abject condition of human nature in many essential respects, it is a consolation to think, that whilst a great deal remains undone, something has been effected by the philanthropy of our country for the protection and comfort of this humble race of men.

Bridge

*Bridge Town**, situated at the south-western extremity of the island, and so named from a small bridge over an adjoining creek or stream, is the metropolis of this small colony, where the legislature of the island and the principal courts of justice hold their sessions, and where all the foreign trade of the island is carried on. The commander in chief of the windward forces resides at the King's House in the eastern suburbs of the town, and the governor on a pleasing eminence at a small distance. Pilgrim, which is the name of the governor's seat, was first occupied by Sir Beville Granville, who administered the government of this Island in the beginning of the last century. It commands an agreeable view of the town, its environs,

* A writer, who describes this town 150 years ago as being about the size of *Hounslow*, says, "it was called *The Bridge*, for that a long bridge was made at first over a little nook of the sea which was rather a bog than the sea." Ligon's History of Barbadoes, folio, London, 1657, p. 25.

and

and the harbour in front. In coming ashore, as you approach a small inlet, on the north side of which and below the bridge the town is principally situated, you pass by the ruins of an old pier-head, demolished by the fury of the surf in the hurricane of the year 1780, which shook this island to its foundations, destroying, it is said, between 4 and 5000 of its inhabitants. The wind blew with such violence that a heavy piece of ordnance (on the hill I believe at St. Annes) was overset on its carriage. Large ships do not approach the wharfs of the town; but they are lined with boats, canoes, and negroes, the commercial business being altogether carried on in this quarter. Many years ago *St. Michaels**, or *the Town at the Bridge* (as it is described in the earliest accounts), was esteemed one of the most opulent and considerable places in the West Indies.

* So called from the parochial church of St. Michaels.

A very

A very intelligent foreigner, who visited this colony at the beginning of the last century, has given a lively and minute description of the town at that early period. As its appearance must have since been materially altered, from fires and the late destructive hurricane of 1780, it may be interesting to recur to his description. "This metropolis (says he*) is a handsome and considerable town. The streets are spacious, cleanly, and well run out. The houses, built in the English style, are remarkable for their glazed windows; nor will you meet in the West Indies, rarely indeed any where, with more opulence, neatness, and elegance, than I found displayed in Bridge Town. The town-house is a handsome edifice, and in good taste. The shops and stores of the merchants are filled with every species of foreign goods. Goldsmiths, jewellers, watch-makers,

* Voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique, par Labat, vol. iv. chap. 19.

and

and various other artisans in easy circumstances abound here; and the place enjoys as considerable a share of commerce as any in the West Indies. It has been asserted that the air of the town is rendered noxious by the morass in its vicinity; but it has no sensible influence on the looks of the inhabitants, nor on the complexion and fecundity of the women, who are all married, and surrounded by children*." Whatever it might have been at the period of this description, the present appearance of the town I must confess disappointed and displeased me very much on landing. As few nations can be put in the least competition with the English for cleanliness, and all the external signs of comfort about their habi-

* I should have been inclined from this passage to have suspected the author of a little partiality to the English, if his work did not breathe in other parts a malignant spirit of national prejudice and hostility. The morass of which he speaks in the above passage has been since in a great measure drained.

tations,

tations, I was sensibly struck with the disagreeable aspect of a place of so much consequence in the West Indies as Bridge Town. Its streets in a great measure unpaved; the decayed and warped exterior of the wooden houses; the dirty and unfinished fronts of the brick dwellings, with smutty timbers and staggering piazzas, excited at first an idea that the national character was totally vitiated or lost in this torrid climate. But a little reflection satisfied me that it might be ascribed altogether to the influence of causes which do not in the least derogate from the colonial taste for cleanliness and comfort. The perpetual heat, interrupted only by occasional showers of heavy rain, succeeded by an immediate blaze of sun-shine, cannot fail to penetrate and consume any substance constantly exposed to the weather. Hence the crumbling and dilapidated appearance of all the buildings,—particularly about their roofs and basements, which are more severely affected by the heat and damp. The strong exha-

exhalations also and mingled odours of the streets, which immediately follow the rain, are not a little disagreeable to a new comer; for an intelligent nose may analyse the essences of rum, sugar, and melasses, blending with the fragrance of fruits and vegetables, and the fetid effluvia of mud and negro population. It is further to be considered, that most of the principal inhabitants of the towns intend their dwellings merely as places of temporary residence, till they have acquired the means of removing to a more temperate climate, and naturally feel less solicitous to dispose of their money in objects of unprofitable and temporary concern. And a third cause, which operates most powerfully to give the West Indian towns an air of poverty and filth, is the great proportion of houses with which they are crowded, belonging to people of colour and emancipated slaves, whose means will rarely enable them to build any thing better than a shed; and who are happy to take possession of and patch up the

the wrecks of houses that otherwise would be deserted. Notwithstanding my impression of the town in general, its outskirts, inhabited chiefly by people of this last description, are exquisitely beautiful. The paths and by-lanes in which their huts are intermingled with plantains, oranges, and jessamines, and the occasional papaw*, cocoa-nut, and tamarind-trees that overshadowed this odoriferous and rural scene, formed a picture enchanting by its novelty, which seemed to realize the youthful visions of imagination.

During my short stay at Barbadoes, even in the fervour of the day I was tempted to frequent these delightful walks, that opened in various directions into the country. But the

* The papaw, or poppau, is of the pruniferous tribe, and usually about 15 feet in height and 6 or 8 in diameter, destitute of branches. The leaves are usually about 15 in number, and near 4 feet in circumference, supported by as many hollow herbaceous foot-stalks, near 2 feet in length, which shoot in a cluster from the summit of the trunk from whence the pedicles to the flowers arise. Bancroft's Nat. Hist. of Guiana.

climate

the climate of the West Indies is extremely unfavourable to a person who is fond of the beauties of the country. After the first exertions in walking, he is overcome by debility and perspiration, whilst many other considerations combine to arrest his curiosity. It seems to be a very prevailing opinion, that the fever of the country has of late years acquired an extraordinary degree of malignity and strength; for, under the awful impediment that it presents to Europeans at this day, one would suppose it impossible for them to effect a settlement. With new comers, exposure to the sun, exercise, or any extraordinary excitement of the system, is almost invariably the cause of disease. The night air and dews are also as formidable as the heat of the day; so that it is only at the moment of sun-rise or sun-set that, with any prudence, one can venture abroad. The country also afforded me the greatest discouragement in my excursions, for the roads after the rains at a small distance from the

town were scarcely passable in a carriage; and there are no houses of public entertainment where the traveller can repose himself after fatigue; and too often the generous hospitality of his host, in private houses, requires those hours to be devoted to the table which are most favourable for an examination of the country.

Along the shore to the north of Bridge Town I found the road extremely picturesque. It leads through a long avenue of shady cocoa-nut trees, over-arched by their palmated and spacious leaves, and fenced on each side by prickly pears, or the blades of aloes. In occasional openings, or through the stems of the trees, you behold the masters' dwelling-houses with the negro-huts adjoining; and over a rich vale, abounding with cotton shrubs and maize, the hills at a small distance spotted with wind-mills, sugar-works, and a few lofty cabbage-trees, or cocoa-nuts. At times the road approaches the sea and leads along the beach, frequently

overspread by cedars or manchineel*. It then winds into the plantations, where the cultivated parterres of cotton and tropical plants are often relieved by groups of cocoa-nuts and plantains, the leaves of which, in the form of squares or quadrangular figures, have a singular effect in the landscape. This is the general character of the scenery on the south and west of the island. The road continues between the beach and the rising rocky ground at a small distance towards *Speights Town*—a little beyond which the ridge of rocks approaches nearer to the sea, and forms at length a promontory round

*This luxuriant shrub, or tree, which I observed frequently on the sea-side, bears a small apple, and afforded the Indians a juice, one of the ingredients with which they empoisoned their arrows. Had I not been cautioned against it, I should certainly have tasted the apples, which lay scattered in profusion on the road as I passed. It might be worth while, I should think, to eradicate this poisonous wood in the neighbourhood of a town so much frequented by strangers as Bridge Town.

the north of the island. But the highest land is in the interior behind *Speights Town*, and in the fruitful district called Scotland, which in point of white population I believe is unequalled in the West Indies. Indeed, the population of the island is extremely great, there being nearly one inhabitant for each square acre.

It is now nearly 200 years since this island was first occupied by the English; before which time, though it had been successively visited by the Spaniards and Portuguese, and named, it is said not to have been laid down in any sea-chart*. The land is so low that it may be easily passed unseen on entering the American Archipelago, and is extremely difficult of access when in that sea, from adverse winds and currents, which are often insurmountable to unexperienced or unskilful navigators. To these causes, in part, it may be owing that the island continued un-

* Edwards's History of the West Indies, chap. 10.

inhabited

inhabited by the Charaibs or Windward Indians. The only traces of former visitors discovered by our earliest settlers were some relics of pottery, and an excellent brood of wild hogs, which had been left there, it is supposed, by the Portuguese. The name of the island has been generally attributed to the Spaniards, who it is thought derived it from the wild fig-tree* *(ficus Indica)* with which the woods abounded;—though it has been said† that the Portuguese called it '*Los Barbados,*' from its wild uncultivated appearance, it being the only island in this quarter uninhabited. But wildness could hardly have been a characterizing feature of any transatlantic island; and I should think the etymology which derives it from the

* ..... The *bearded* fig,
Prince of the forest, gave Barbadoes name.
Grainger's Sugarcane, lib. i. ver. 132.

† History of Barbadoes from its first Discovery and Settlement to the End of the Year 1767, Dodsley's edition, 1768.

wild

wild fig-tree more natural and striking. The native productions, however, of Barbadoes seem now to have given place to adventitious ones; for almost the whole of the island is under cultivation.

On the authority of authentic documents preserved from the fire which happened at Bridge Town in the year 1668, it is related* "that an English ship called the Olive-branch, homeward bound from Guinea, touched, and landed some men, who set up a cross, about the year 1615, in or near St. James's Town, and marked on a tree '*James King of England and this Island.*'—Afterwards, about the year 1624, a ship belonging to Sir William Courteen (one of the most considerable merchants then in London) stopped at this island: about thirty of the crew landed, and made a settlement on the westward part of the island, although they found the country entirely uninhabited, and over grown with

* History of Barbadoes.

thick

thick woods." The principal emigration to this colony took place during the civil war in Cromwell's time. The land was for the most part portioned out at the settlement in small lots of ten acres, and the division of property, as well as the white population, is comparatively greater than in any colony in the West Indies. In the year 1650, scarcely twenty years after the emigration may be supposed to have commenced, Barbadoes could muster 10,000* foot and 1000 horse; and in the expedition undertaken against Hispaniola, under Penn and Venables, it is said to have actually furnished 3500 soldiers. At the Restoration the population has been computed at nearly 50,000 whites; and from the flourishing state of this island, as well perhaps as from the circumstance of its having supplied an emigration to other colonies which were afterwards settled to leeward, it has been denominated 'Little England.' At the

* Ligon states the population at this period at about 50,000.

last

last period to which the estimate of the population refers, there must have been a considerable number of slaves, as in the middle of the seventeenth century our colonists had begun to imitate the example of the discoverers of the West Indies; who, having exhausted the native population of many of their islands, had recourse to the continent of Africa for a supply of negroes*. The inhabitants of Barbadoes first began to cul-

* The Portuguese were the carriers, under a patent of the Emper or Charles the Fifth; but the philanthropy of *Las Casas*, so extolled in dramatic story, can hardly be vindicated in having promoted this admirable expedient for the purpose of relieving the unfortunate Indians of Hispaniola and the other islands.

Although African companies had previously been established in England, it is said the Dutch for some years principally supplied our colony at Barbadoes with negroes, while they trafficked with the inhabitants for their produce, the principal part of which they took off, till the war during the protectorate of Cromwell, and the Navigation Act, to which it gave rise, put a stop to this commercial intercourse.

tivate

tivate tobacco, indigo, cotton, and Indian corn. Although the Spaniards had introduced the sugar-cane from the Canaries into Hispaniola shortly after its discovery, Europe continued to be supplied with sugar at an exorbitant price from the East, or the shores of the Mediterranean. The Dutch early in the seventeenth century, when they took possession of part of the Brazils, finding in the cultivation of the cane an inexhaustible source of profit, set the example to our colonists at Barbadoes, where the land was found eminently calculated for the propagation of this valuable plant. The dark mould of this island being a soil, says the intelligent poet* who celebrates the sugarcane,

> .....which the cane
> With partial fondness loves, and oft surveys
> Its progeny with wonder ———

it appears rather singular to us at present that a resident of St. Kitts writing on this subject should have bestowed his chief enco-

* Dr. Grainger of St. Kitts.

mium

mium on Barbadoes as a sugar-island. But the soil, probably, was more fertile when he wrote than at present*; and it has been supposed that this and some of the Charibbean Islands are sensibly on the decline:—an opinion which, from the changes of season, the irregularities of crops, and other fluctuating circumstances, may be liable to some controversy; though I think it will seem not unfounded, if we consider that after a certain number of years the natural strength of the land becomes exhausted, and an increased expense is necessarily induced by employing artificial means in the cultivation, while some of our recent settlements present a more profitable field of exertion to the speculative and industrious.—But perhaps there is no just reason to lament with an elegant writer, "that Barbadoes is not likely to be restored to its former opulence and splendour;"

* In 1657, according to Ligon, the produce of sugar was estimated on an average at 3000lbs. weight for every acre of cane land. It then sold at 3d. per lb.

for

for the same energy and exertions act with undiminished force and increased effect over a more expanded surface.

It has been truly said by Mr. Edwards, that on the decline of the sugar-plantations the inhabitants of this island have found a great resource in the cultivation of cotton, which is less affected by drought than any other West Indian produce. But it seems that cotton of the first quality and staple is not the produce of the Charibbean Islands. The cane still flourishes in many parts of Barbadoes; and the crop of the present year (1802) has amounted to considerably more than the average calculated on three late years by Mr. Edwards would have led me to expect. But from the lowness of the land in general, and the want of wood, it might naturally be expected that Barbadoes would often experience those droughts which are so fatal to the production of sugar; though during my stay there in the season of the autumnal rains there were continual showers,

showers, and sometimes successive days of rain.

It is curious to observe the expensive operations of agriculture in this tropical climate. On a plantation which I visited, a gang of at least sixty negroes was employed the whole of the day in preparing a small piece of land, for the reception of the plant canes, in a process called *holeing*. They were going over the ground a second time, it having been previously dug in holes of about two feet by a foot and a half, exhibiting at a distant view a very neat and regular appearance. The labourers, consisting of men and women with hoes in their hands, were distributed according to their strength, two or more to each hole, and performed their work in a line with each other in a retrograde motion. They appeared to be in good spirits, and to execute the task with ease and cheerfulness; whilst the black drivers with whips in their hands (which however they found no occasion that I saw to exercise) stood over them, directing

and

and stimulating the work. About noon they quitted the field, and shortly afterwards drew up in order, and were called forth successively to receive their allowance of provisions, consisting of maize and dried fish, which had been previously laid out on a sort of terrace. Although the plough, where it has been introduced, is certainly a great relief to the negroes in preparing the land for planting, yet, from the enervation and debility which reign over agricultural labour in this tropical climate, all its operations are necessarily slothful and expensive. It is not an unusual thing to see a team of as many as sixteen or even twenty diminutive * oxen labouring with a small load, and three or four lusty negroes occupied in a work that one man with a single horse and cart would perform with ease in England.

* Other beasts of burthen tried in this country have not succeeded so well. Camels were introduced many years ago, but failed—it is supposed, from improper food or treatment.

The

The same debility pervades all ranks. You meet in the roads and avenues of the town ridersin loose linen dresses and broad-brimmed umbrella hats, their horses gently ambling or pacing; a black running footman, perhaps with his hand twisted in the horse's tail, following; and a distance of twelve or fourteen miles is a journey of no inconsiderable exertion for the day.

Barbadoes compared with the rest of the West Indies may be esteemed a very healthy island; and the present state of our troops in garrison there, not uninfluenced by the distinguished zeal and attention of the commanding officer (General* Grinfield), will remarkably justify that character as it respects Europeans.—But from the meagre and sallow appearance of the native yeomanry and citizens, their sunken eyes, relaxed coun-

* Since writing the above, I have truly to regret that this valuable officer, and esteemed friend, has himself fallen a sacrifice to that disease which he was so studious to avert from others.

tenances,

tenances, and languid motions, I felt always on beholding them that the climate was irreconcileable with the constitution of their race. I am afraid also, from the mean and disingenuous behaviour of some of the inferior white inhabitants of the town, that the climate, and perhaps their association with the blacks, have not a little relaxed in them the strength and integrity of the British moral character.

The court-house at Bridge Town is a neat, spacious, and convenient building. I was present there at the meeting of the assembly of the island, and the sitting of the governor (Lord Seaforth) and council in the capacity of a court of chancery. The business before the assembly produced little or no discussion on topics such as those which usually occupy the attention of provincial legislatures, best understood by private or colloquial consultation. A bill I heard was in contemplation to extend the privileges of the people of colour, who labour under some pretty severe restrictions as to the rights of holding real

real property and giving their testimony in courts of law. The council-chamber presented a technical question for the exercise of the forensic talents of two or three respectable advocates at the bar: but the decisions of the noble chief magistrate who presided, much to the satisfaction of the community, exhibit a striking proof that an enlightened mind may arrive at a just conclusion in matters of equitable science without the assistance of rhetorical ingenuity*.

A college for the education of youth has been founded, and liberally endowed, in the parish of St. Johns; but it has not of late prospered. Indeed, from the superior advantages of European education, it can only be an object of secondary concern.—The caves and bituminous springs which furnish the Barbadoes tar, from the suddenness of my departure, I was unfortunately unable to visit.

* His excellency, from some indistinctness of hearing, generally passes by the arguments of counsel, and consults only the authorities and documents offered to him in judicial proceedings.

The flat which extends behind Bridge Town exhibits a lively picture of West Indian scenery. It is inhabited by numberless small proprietors, and is remarkable for the richness of cultivation and variety of its productions. The highways are principally fenced with log-wood shrubs: and the little patches of eddoes, Guinea corn, cotton or yams, distinguishable by their difference of foliage and verdure, are spread round the embowered retreats of the citizens, or the houses of planters, with rows of stately cabbage- or cocoa-nut trees. "The plantations at Barbadoes" (remarks the traveller before quoted, whose picture of the past bears a curious affinity with the present) "are comparatively much smaller than in some other islands, owing to the confined limits of the island and its extraordinary population: for, every one being here desirous of land, it is naturally scarce, and the occupiers numerous. The country houses are preferable to those of the town, being large and roomy, with

glazed windows, and apartments judiciously and conveniently distributed. The approach to them is generally through avenues of shady and ornamental trees, such as tamarinds, or the large species of orange-tree called shaddock. The riches and taste of the owners are conspicuous in the furniture of their houses, and the quantity and elegance of their plate." With respect to the mode of living and diet, one should imagine of great consequence in a country so productive of diseases, this traveller proceeds to remark: "The inhabitants make only one principal meal in the day, which is their dinner. It usually begins about two (now four); and if they have any visitor, the company rarely breaks up till the night is far advanced. They use principally a meat diet, with very little bread; but entertain handsomely—having good cooks, fine linen, and manifesting a great deal of cleanliness and method in their domestic œconomy. Gentlemen of fortune import partridges or pheasants

sants alive from Europe, and preserve them in mews. Indeed, few nations are less sparing of expense in procuring every foreign luxury. They can invariably boast of wines and liquors of every sort; and it is their pride to send away their guests so mellow as to be scarcely able to find their way: on this account such extraordinary attention is paid to the roads in Barbadoes*."

The most agreeable situations in the country are certainly those *to windward* (which is a term universally used in the West Indies to denote the east, from whence the wind generally blows); and the spots commonly chosen for building are those which are highest and most exposed to the draught of air. Some of the country houses are

* Labat's Travels, chap. 9. But this was not the case with the inferior planters. Some of them, as Ligon says, in his time did not eat *bone-meat* above twice a week; the other days potatoes, loblolly, and bonavist. Their white servants were never allowed meat unless an ox died.

well contrived for all the purposes of comfort and coolness. But the mode of building generally practised might be greatly improved upon; nor should I apprehend one need go further for a perfect example than that of the native Indians in the construction of their dwellings. I was shown a model of a house with all their domestic conveniences imported from South America. The sides represented a wicker work of bamboo canes, and the roof a tight thatch, I believe of *palmetto* leaves; thus admitting the breeze horizontally in every direction, and excluding the rain at top. Their beds were a loose elastic net-work, like the hammocks of the Chariabs, who made them of cotton, and of a texture remarkably neat and durable. The only objection I found to the model of the house was, that it did not provide against an admission of rain, or the sun's rays, in an oblique direction (which might easily be done by substituting the moveable lattice-work resembling Venetian blinds, now partially in

in use); nor of the damps affecting always the lower parts of the West Indian houses, and which ought necessarily to be constructed of more solid materials. No doubt the aborigines, advancing towards civilization, as these beginnings evidently show, had become studious of those comforts and conveniences which soften the rigour of the tropical sun, and which their experience would have gradually discovered much more effectually than the knowledge of the Europeans, whose inveterate habits and ideas cannot easily assimilate with the climate.

CHAPTER II.

The author proceeds by St. Vincents, St. Lucia, and Martinique, to Dominica.—Some description of the last island.—He proceeds by Guadaloupe to Antigua.

On leaving Barbadoes and proceeding to leeward, after a day's sail you arrive at that chain of islands which extend for the distance of nearly 2000 miles in sight of each other, from one continent of America to the other.

Many persons observing the mountainous appearance of the islands, and tracing a ridge, as it were, from the north-east point of South America, which projects into the ocean at the *Bocas*, or high rocks in the channel between Trinidad and the main land, through the windward and leeward islands Porto-Rico, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Cuba, almost to the mountains west of the Mississippi in North America, have been induced to suppose

pose that a violent current of water, impelled by the continual easterly winds into the American Archipelago, has gradually overflowed the low land, and left only the more elevated above the surface of the sea*. Notwithstanding, however, the ingenious speculations of naturalists, the formation of the globe, and the inequalities on its surface, are matters as yet too much involved in obscurity to admit of any satisfactory discussion. But there is no just reason to suspect that the earth is of anterior creation to the sea, which this hypothesis assumes: on the contrary, the direct reverse of such a supposition is most consonant with appearances. In many parts of this region the low land seems a mere concretion of marine and organized substances, and the rocky parts appear to have been covered and acted upon, at some period subsequent to their original

* The Abbé Raynal and some earlier writers have advanced this opinion, though it is not adopted by more modern theorists.

con-

configuration, by the sea. The coasts in general do not run out in bluffs, and exhibit fractured strata, which might have been expected from any violent action on the land by the ocean's water; but the smaller hills and eminences rise gradually from their bases, for the most part in regular and composed forms, very much inclined to the figure of Vesuvius and other volcanic mountains.

I sailed through the straits between St. Vincents and St. Lucia, and remained for some time becalmed under the shore of the latter island. St. Lucia, as observed from the sea, appears composed of several hills, in the shape of cones immersed in water, and an assemblage of grand and more elevated mountains clothed in wood, which occupy the central parts. The vivid green of the cane fields, which I beheld on its southern and eastern shores, and in the apertures between the hills or on their sides, was beautifully contrasted by the sombre shades of the forest which covers the great body of the island.

island. The view of this fatal spot, esteemed of so much importance, in this quarter of the globe, in our contests with France, and the grave of so many of our unfortunate countrymen*, it was impossible to behold without interest, and a lively sentiment of regret.

From St. Lucia the dark conical hills on the south side of Martinique appeared at hand, and we proceeded along the eastern and northern coast of that island, in view of the lofty shore of Dominica.

The north side of Martinique appears, at a small distance, like the sloping base of an immense pyramid of hills covered with wood, the seat of an extinguished volcano. The inclined plane from the foot of the mountains to the sea, extending several miles along

* Although, since writing the above, that number has been augmented, the spirit and humanity so honourably displayed in the late conquest of this island, by the troops under General Grinfield, render it a matter of exultation rather than regret.

the coast, and from the interior, is one of the finest tracts of cultivated country in the windward islands. It is covered with rich cane-fields, and appeared intersected by deep ravines, which streaked the sides of the mountains, and crossed the plain towards the sea.

The straits between the lofty shores of Martinique and Dominica are subject to sudden, irregular blasts; and the predominant wind, in the vicinity of this as well as of the other islands, is generally overcome by partial and subordinate causes, which sometimes produce an opposite current of air, rendering the navigation deceitful if not dangerous. On the 17th of October, a very calm and serene day, whilst we were admiring the beautiful cane-fields and the sublimity of the mountains of Martinique, the sky to the south was suddenly overcast with black and tempestuous clouds, and it was by no means a disagreeable circumstance to hear loud

loud peals of thunder at a distance; for it is remarkable that thunder seldom* accompanies a hurricane. Although such awful convulsions of nature must necessarily excite our apprehensions, I cannot but say I felt some degree of curiosity mingled with the expectation of such an event. The north or north-east, however, is the quarter from whence these terrible tempests generally issue, and they are felt in their greatest violence (as it were by re-action) from the opposite point of the compass†. An intelligent gentleman

* Indeed I heard it often mentioned in unqualified terms, that it never thundered during a hurricane: but this is certainly not the case.

† A singular effect of this phænomenon occurred at the early settlement of Antigua. The captain of a merchant ship (about 120 tons burthen) being warned by the appearances in the sky of an approaching hurricane, carried his vessel into the harbour of St. Johns; and, having moored and secured her in shoal water by means of some heavy logs of timber on the shore, took refuge with his crew in the adjoining woods. The

gentleman of Dominica, who had been present during several hurricanes, or what where reputed such, in that island, informed me, that although the wind had been extremely violent, its effects, considering the exposure of the land and the frail nature of the buildings, were not greater than what might have been expected from the hardest gales in the

The hurricane came on, and blew for several hours with tremendous violence from the north-east; but a torrent of rain succeeding for a time allayed the wind. Some of the sailors then ventured out to examine the vessel, and found her, notwithstanding all the precautions taken, so completely keel out of water that her mast-heads were literally buried in the sand. Returning with this intelligence to the captain, he had scarcely begun to deplore his misfortune when a counter gale sprang up from the south-west, and blew with greater violence than the former. On its subsiding, he went forth, expecting now that his vessel could be little better than a wreck: but to his astonishment he found her completely righted and afloat; the same force which had occasioned, acting in a contrary direction, had repaired the mischief. *Hist. Gen. des Voyages, par M. La Harpe.*

northern

northern latitudes: yet in some of the other islands they have been undoubtedly felt with greater severity*.

The little island of Dominica, which I next viewed, is an assemblage of lofty and clustering mountains; and it has been said with some truth, that if you were to compress a sheet of paper in your hands and throw it on the table, it would represent the angles and irregularities of the mass of this island. The cultivated patches of rich lands lie in a great measure in the valleys and low sheltered sides of the hills; so that, as you approach the island, it presents, except on the water's edge, a grand but uncultivated scene of rocks, steeps, and high lands covered with wood. On the southern extremity we passed by a

* It is a singular fact, that about ten days before the great hurricane at Barbadoes, the sea rose in Dominica 21 feet above its usual surface, and broke 100 yards from the common shore; although the wind which occasioned this swell was not severely felt on that island.

hill, though apparently small when compared with the stupendous height in its vicinity, yet in itself of no inconsiderable elevation, called *Scotsman's Head*, which is a military post susceptible of easy defence, being inaccesible from the sea, and connected with the shore by a narrow isthmus.

From hence we coasted to the northward along the mountainous shore, from the top of which, on the south, a strong volcanic smoke continually issued; and I distinctly saw a large quantity of brimstone, pointed out to me, which had exsuded from the side of one of the mountains. No commotion has been heard, nor, I believe, has any volcanic flame been lately emitted,—although the internal fire continues, and a hot sulphureous spring issues from the mountain, in which an egg was completely boiled by a fellow-traveller, after we landed, in three minutes. The small coffee plantations, inclosed with high fences to protect the shrubs from the wind, and situated on the acclivities and

sometimes even on the mountain tops, appeared to great advantage from the sea, affording at intervals a relief to the brown and desert solemnity of the scene.

At the foot of the mountains on the western side of the island the town of Roseau* is situated, the present seat of government of this colony. It has been extremely well laid out, by the French, on the south of an agreeable rivulet which has wrought its way through a rocky channel to the sea. The streets, in some parts paved, are wide, intersecting each other often at acute angles; and there is a spacious market-place separated by a range of stores from the beach, on which the surf is sometimes so violent as to render the landing extremely inconvenient. The town, consisting of 500 houses, exclusive of huts, has evidently the marks of dilapidation and decay. This may be partly owing to the destructive fire of 1781, which consumed 500 houses. In vain the eye habi-

* *Roseau* signifies *a wild cane.*

tuated

rated to a more friendly climate looks about for cleanliness and comfort; every thing seems hastening to dissolution. But the torrid power of the sun creates with the same rapidity that it destroys: the ground is covered with insects; and the luxuriant growth of weeds, which spring up in a moment in every neglected spot, seems to prove the admonition of the poet—

"*Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.*"

Roseau is extremely well supplied with fruit, vegetables, and fish; but the market is deficient in poultry and butchers-meat. The northern aspect of the town along the banks of the rivulet is lively and refreshing. The governor's house is placed on an elevated situation behind a fortress, underneath a hill called *Morne Bruce*, on which are the principal barracks for the troops stationed on the island. I rode to the top of the Morne, from whence in front you have a fine bird's-eye view of the town, and vessels at anchor

in the road. Behind you, at the bottom of a perpendicular cliff, a dark vale pierces into the mountainous and central parts of the island, through which the little rivulet or torrent, passing Roseau, takes its course over a bed of stones, and amidst a wild and romantic scene. In the abyss beneath, and on the banks of the rivulet, I saw a fine and verdant plantation of canes, and a cultivated strip of land, which running eastward seemed lost in the shadows of the stupendous, inaccessible mountains. This valley affords an agreeable residence to its inhabitants, as the sun cannot make its appearance till the morning is far advanced: but a foul and malignant vapour frequently rises from the bottom, and settles on the heights. The unfortunate troops stationed on Morne Bruce have of late but too fatally experienced its pestilential effects. When I visited it, however, the garrison was healthy, and the foundations were laid of a more airy and spacious building, which it is hoped will be less exposed to the dis-

eases of the climate. Although this island has been long in our possession, many of the original inhabitants remain, and the French seems still the prevailing language among the negroes and people of colour. In Dominica, it is said, there are two hundred coffee plantations, principally belonging to French planters, producing in a good year about four million pounds of coffee; and fifty sugar plantations, the average produce of which is estimated at three thousand hogsheads* per annum. The general surface of the country is, however, unfavourable to the cultivation of sugar, and comparatively a very small portion of it is yet cleared of its wood. Roseau is a free port, but subject to restrictions which operate much to the discouragement of foreigners. There are some few wandering red Charaibs in this island; but I did not accidentally meet with any of them. I was the more curious to do so, as their race is now

* Atwood's History of Dominica, chap. 5.

nearly

nearly extinct; and I wished to ascertain the truth of the general opinion of the Americans, that their personal resemblance to the Indians of the northern continent is as striking as that of their customs and habits. A remnant of the Charaibs (one of the bodies transported from St. Vincents, and landed at Rattan island) is now near *Truxillo*, in the province of *Guatimala* in South America. At first they suffered severely from sickness; but they gradually overcame the change of climate, and now supply the feeble Spaniards with recruits to garrison that province. Their total extinction is, however, near at hand, and a wretched destiny perhaps awaits the islands of which we have deprived them. At present the strength and energy of a great nation, in its meridian, by the emanation of its population and power supports a forced and unnatural state of society: but when those energies shall cease to operate (for there is an inevitable change

that awaits all sublunary states), and nature resumes her uncontrolled dominion, they probably will become inhabited by a mongrel race of people, under the influence of some superior power, and destitute of that generous and indomitable spirit which many of the American savages cherished in the wildness of their woods; the vigorous forerunner of a dignified freedom, which probably would have attended their subsequent civilization. But one can hardly anticipate in the future history of a people the elevated character of freemen, where the prototype will be found in slavery, enervation, and the promiscuous intercourse of dissimilar nations.

In the night-time I passed by Prince Rupert's Bay on the northern extremity of the island. It is supposed that two mountains, called the *Cabrittes*, in this quarter, might be rendered as impregnable as the rock of Gibraltar. Two attempts to drain a large morass in their vicinity have been unfortunately frustrated—

trated—in the last instance, owing to a mutiny in the West Indian regiment employed in that service.

After leaving Dominica I sailed nearly round the island of Guadaloupe. Stretching close along the shore of Basse Terre, a strong sulphureous exhalation came from the mountains near Point Petre, and impregnated the air at some considerable distance. A quantity of burning lava issued from one of these mountains a few years ago, much to the terror of the inhabitants, though without producing any injurious consequence. The coast presented a melancholy picture of deserted plantations; the negroes not finding the same disposition to understand, or the same alacrity to comply with, the late, as they did with the former, theory of the governor, who first promulgated freedom, and now recalls them to a state of slavery.

Instead of the once flourishing coast, we saw only here and there a negro fire, and

and a few scattered patches of corn amidst extensive plantations of weeds. A very agreeable contrast, however, was shortly afterwards presented to my view on landing at Antigua,

CHAPTER III.

General description of Antigua.—Town of St. Johns.—Reflections on the colonial government.

THIS valuable little island is for the most part encircled by a range of hills, which rise to a considerable height in the south and south-western quarters. The interior, with the exception of some spots of high stony ground and tracts of pasture, exhibits a level and well cultivated surface of rich cane land. In the low situations the soil, where I had an opportunity to observe it, seemed generally a black mould; on the rising grounds it was often tinctured with clay or calcareous marl, and in the most valuable spots assumed the colour of a fine chocolate brown. From a central height turning to the east, and thence northerly to the town of St. Johns, the

the eye traverses a view of one of the fairest and best cultivated tracts of country in the windward islands. It is highly pleasing to a person who has recently come from the woods and mountains of the more southern colonies, to behold so extensive a scene of cleared land. The whole of the interior, though divested for the most part of its native wood, is by no means under cultivation of the hoe: a considerable part of the island, where the soil is unfit for canes (which seem particularly to engage the attention of the planters in Antigua), is laid out in pastures, and covered with herds of cattle*. Here and there I observed some small groves consisting principally of white cedars; and on the pasture grounds an

* According to Mr. Edwards, 34,000 acres in this island are occupied by pasture grounds and sugar plantations. But I cannot say how far this is correct, as he differs very materially from other estimates of the total quantity of land, which, though he states it at 59,838 acres, probably amounts to 69,275.

abundance

abundance of the guava bushes, yielding that fruit from whence the excellent conserves of guava marmalade and jelly are made*. Nothing appears more completely like a garden than the sugar plantation under good cultivation; and such is the prevailing scenery in the interior of this island where it is susceptible of tillage. The green fields of cane (which when I saw them in many places had shot up into feathery tops previous to their ripening) were intermixed with provision grounds of yams and eddoes, or the dark and regular parterres of holed land prepared for the reception of the succeeding year's plant-canes. A large windmill on each estate; the planter's dwelling-house and sugar-works, with the negro huts, in their beautiful groves of oranges, plantains, and cocoa-nut trees, completed a landscape that conti-

* Antigua has been celebrated for the flavour of its sapadillas, and is generally supposed to produce the best kind of the queen or black pine-apples in the West Indies, to which the dry weather is favourable.

nually

nually recurred in passing over the island. Unfortunately droughts, the natural bane of this colony, and perhaps aggravated by the loss of its wood, are at times severely felt in Antigua; and I believe the most seasonable, if not the only part of the island watered by continual rains, is that mountainous district in the south-west which still retains in some measure its natural growth of trees. Of late years Antigua has experienced some exemption from this formidable evil, and may be considered, notwithstanding Mr. Edwards's* suggestion that it is declining, as yet in great prosperity and vigour. Of the towns laid down in the map of this island I

* I should remark, however, that since the first publication of the History of the West Indies the *Otaheite cane* has been introduced from Guadaloupe into Antigua, and thence communicated to Jamaica. Although, like the rest of its species, this plant suffers severely from dry weather, it recovers with more facility from the refreshing influence of a shower of rain.

visited

visited Parham, Falmouth, and St. Johns, the principal port and metropolis.

Parham, a port of entry, consisting of two or three houses or stores, a custom-house, and church, with a pleasant road leading through them, is situated on the eastern coast in the vicinity of a morass, and on a bay which, like all the inlets on the windward coasts, more exposed to the accumulation of sand, is shoal and inconvenient for shipping *.

Falmouth, on the south side of the island, is almost surrounded by a circle of high hills, and lies near the bottom of a wide bay of no great depth of water, and divided only by a narrow isthmus from the dock-yard and naval station at English Harbour, one of the finest and most remarkable in the West

* At a small distance to the southward of Parham, there is a hill which is thought to have been probably a burying-place of the Indians. But how will this accord with Mr. Edwards's supposition, that Antigua was never inhabited by that race of people ?

Indies,

Indies. At the back of Falmouth, towards the eastern part of the ridge of mountains occupying the south-west of the island, on an eminence called Monk's Hill, is situated Fort George, sometimes used as a place of safety and retreat in cases of extremity.

St. Johns, the principal town in the island, is regularly laid out on the eastern side of a harbour on the north-west coast, and rises with a pretty steep ascent from the shore to the summit of a considerable hill. It may be about three quarters of a mile long and half a mile broad; and has been said to contain one thousand eight hundred houses since the two destructive fires which have recently laid it waste. It is very unfavourable to the health and comfort of the inhabitants of the principal towns I saw in the West Indies, that, for the convenience of the shipping, they are situated on the leeward coasts; a circumstance not only affecting the coolness but the purity of the air they breathe. Yet St. Johns, from advantages

which it enjoys in common with the rest of the island, as well as those which are peculiar to itself, is the healthiest town I visited in the Charibbean Islands. It is not so low as to be deprived of the easterly breeze; and sloping towards the sea, the torrents which issue through the streets in the rainy season, although they may render them rough and inconvenient for carriages, effectually sweep off the noxious materials and stagnant mud which I found so offensive at Bridge Town. In other respects the town bears a considerable resemblance to that place which I have before particularly described. Some labour is at present bestowed on the pavement of the streets: but I fear, from a want of materials well adapted for the purpose, or proper workmen, and from the peculiar circumstances I have before mentioned, the town will profit but little from this effort to improve it. Near the centre of St. Johns is a neat stone building for the transaction of the public business. The rooms above are appropriated

to

to the legislative assemblies, and the hall on the ground floor is extremely well adapted for the courts of justice. At the top of the town stands a large brick parish church, differing only in appearance from buildings of that description in England, in the circumstance of its windows being supplied with large wooden shutters, which are generally left open, but occasionally shut to exclude the sun or rain. The church-yard is surrounded by a brick wall, and the pillars of the south gate are ornamented with figures of the Baptist and Evangelist in Portland stone. In the interior of the church are some handsome marble monuments of late construction, attesting that a few of its opulent proprietors have made this island their residence and their grave. The church boasts of a good organ and an excellent organist. Part of the Sunday's congregation, which is in general rather inclined to black than white, is composed of the children of a charity school emanating from the bright example of the

mother

mother country, and cherishing even in the midst of slavery the spirit of an exalted faith.

The governor of the Leeward Islands (Lord Lavington) is accommodated with a house on the height above the town, not remarkable for its size or structure; but as he generally resides here, in preference to the other islands under his government, a plan has lately been adopted, and a very liberal sum of money voted by the legislature of Antigua, for erecting a more commodious and respectable building for his use. The legislature of Antigua, besides the governor, is composed of a council appointed by the crown; and a house of assembly, consisting of twenty-four members, elected by eleven districts* in the island. On the proceedings of these

* In fact, the island consists of six parishes, comprehending fifteen divisions, which, for the purpose of electing representatives, are distributed into ten districts, each sending two members, exclusive of St. Johns,

these two bodies the Governor has a negative. From its consequence as a naval station, and its windward position with respect to the leeward islands in general, Antigua may be considered as the most important of the islands in this government; for the executive power of the leeward islands, from what may be called the establishment of this colony, has been lodged in one governor*. It has been asked, indeed, Why may not the government of all our windward possessions, partaking so essentially of the same laws, customs, and manners, be consolidated in the same individual legislative and executive bodies? It must be confessed that a chain of

Johns, the capital, which sends four to the assembly. Mr. Edwards is therefore accused of a slight inaccuracy when he says the island is divided into eleven districts; an inaccuracy, if it can be called one, thus easily explained.

* The other windward islands now constitute separate governments. In 1763 Grenada, St. Vincents, Tobago and Dominica were united in one government for some short time under General Melville.

islands

islands of as great an extent in the British empire in the West Indies is at present in that predicament (viz. the Bahamas). There is also a British colony (Jamaica), in which the attendance of the remote members at the seat of the legislature is more inconvenient by land, than their attendance at a central spot might be found in these colonies by sea. On the one hand, it might be supposed that such a legislative body, in the ratio of the extent of country it embraced, would be more respectable, liberal, and enlightened; that the administration of one would be less expensive than of several governments; while the colonial establishment would derive that superiority of energy and power which a whole would possess over the aggregate of its parts taken individually. To this, however, it might fairly be objected, that setting aside considerations of personal inconvenience in the attendance of the members, there would be a deficiency of local knowledge; and that many delays and inconveniences

would result from distant communications, which are not felt in this species of domestic legislation. No doubt, if such a project were conceived, the vanity of those persons who figure in the present epitomes of parliamentary government would be inclined to oppose a scheme to exclude themselves from any part in the drama. But the experience of the present age has too fatally proved the fallacy of speculations indulged by cabinet politicians; and demonstrated that practice differs as much from theory in matters of political science as in agriculture, or objects of speculative experiment in the common pursuits of life. It may be alleged, that this is a sort of franchise which the inhabitants of these little islands have enjoyed, by charter, from their first settlement, and in which they have as much right to protection by law as any of the corporations of Great Britain in their municipal privileges. But above all, the delicate and heterogeneous structure of society in these communities renders it extremely

tremely dangerous and impolitic, upon the most plausible speculations, to hazard the fallible experiment of a change—*Paries ubi proximus ardet.*

A high projection of rocks, called *Rat Island*, runs out into the bay of St. Johns, on which a fort is situated commanding the harbour. A communication between this island and the town, for the convenience of the fort, has been made by means of a narrow causeway. But it has been supposed that the water in the harbour has become more shoal, and that great inconvenience in process of time may be experienced from an accumulation of mud and sand now deprived of their original vent. There can be no reason to apprehend, however, that this subject will escape the vigilance of the government in a matter of so much importance to the existence of the town. The heights north of St. Johns command a beautiful view of the town and harbour, Rat Island, its fort, and the opposite shore of hills capped with brushy wood.

At a distance, over the bright ocean, you behold the elevated little island of Montserrat, and the pyramidical mountains of Nevis and St. Kitts.

Antigua does not present the same appearances of the action of volcanic fire as most of the Charibbean Islands; although I was inclined to think there are traces of it in the mountainous parts, from some stones I observed resembling tufa, which had apparently undergone fusion. Considerable labour seems to have been bestowed on the roads, though, from the nature of the ground in many parts, and the violence of the periodical rains, they are fit only for light single-horsed vehicles, such as are generally used. With respect to the transportation of articles, except such as are of great bulk, the number of slaves at command is no where more remarkable than on the highways. I have never witnessed a more lively or grotesque scene than they afford on Sunday, the day of market, and also the day of mirth and recreation, when the

the whole negro population of the island seems in motion. The clothes in which they appear, and the property they display on these occasions, would induce one to believe that the rigors of slavery, on many estates, are not a little softened by the liberality and benevolence of the masters; and, indeed, notwithstanding the absolute and unlimited nature of their legitimate authority, a sentiment of honour amongst the planters protects the slave in the enjoyment of the little *peculium* he may acquire, as effectually as the most sacred laws; while some of the negroes are perhaps richer than many peasants in the heart of Europe.

The general character of the West Indians is extremely pleasing to strangers. They are frank, lively, and generous. Hospitality is carried to an extreme which is unknown in Europe; and there are few persons, I believe, who have ever visited these islands who have not separated from many of the inhabitants with regret.

Mr.

Mr. Edwards, in his account of Jamaica, has by no means coloured this part of his description too highly; and I would refer to his work for a just and eloquent encomium on the manners and dispositions of the inhabitants. If, on the reverse of the picture, from quick sensibilities of nature and highly wrought sentiments, the sense of provocation or the spirit of mutual crimination may be sometimes found too ardent, it can only be lamented that there is rarely any great good in this life unattended by some correspondent evil.

The Charibbean name of Antigua was *Yamaca*, a word, in the language of the natives of the larger islands, signifying a country that abounds in springs: and it is thought strange that such a term should have been applied by the Charaibes to an island (at times) destitute of springs, rivulets, and fresh water.

Columbus, in his second voyage, passing through the Charibbean Islands, from Dominica to Hispaniola, and observing Antigua

at a distance, named it, after a church in Seville, *Santa Maria de la Antigua*. As he had bestowed this favourite name of *Santa Maria* on many of the neighbouring islands, such as *Marie Galante*, *St. Marie of Guadaloupe*, and *Santa Maria de Redonda*, for the sake of brevity, in three of the four islands, it is now usually dropped, and the last or distinctive term only preserved*.

Little occurs in the early history and colonization of Antigua, either interesting or curious. It was first *settled*† by the English, some short time after Mr. Warner's esta-

* A gentleman, however, of no common accuracy and discernment was inclined to suppose, that the original name of the island was *St. Mary*, and at a later period distinguished, from an island so called near the Spanish Main, by the epithet Antigua.—The authority for this opinion was not mentioned to me.

† One of the first settlements is said to have been at Old Road. Some of the French, when driven with the English from St. Kitts by the Spaniards in 1630, took refuge for a short time in this island.

blishment

blishment at St. Kitts, in the early part of the seventeenth century, and was described, in the Governor's letters patent of that period, as one of his Majesty's Leeward Charibbean Islands. During the war which raged in Europe between the years 1660 and 1670, after some progress had been made in the clearing of the land and the cultivation of sugar, it was attacked by the French, who, according to the exterminating mode of warfare introduced by the Spaniards, which at that time prevailed in the West Indies, laid waste the colony. They first appeared off *Five Islands*, and demanded a heavy contribution in negroes and sugar as the price of the island. A compact was entered into with the conquerors, to the breach of which some of the inhabitants were afterwards stimulated by a Colonel Fitch: but when the French had landed a body of negroes and Charaibes at Runaway Bay, a little to the north of Rat Island, he deserted his entrenchments

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in that quarter, and abandoned the island to the mercy of a vindictive and exasperated enemy.

About eight years elapsed from this period till Colonel Codrington emigrated with a body of planters from Barbadoes, and in 1674 laid the foundation of the present colony.

This small community has at different periods exhibited some distinguished proofs of a spirited independence and liberality of character. In the instance of a licentious and despotic governor towards the beginning of last century, who, on being recalled at the remonstrance of the inhabitants, had refused to yield obedience to the royal pleasure, five hundred of them rose, as one man, and with the loss of a considerable part of their number, from the opposition of the tyrant's guards, forced him to atone for the usurpation with his life.—Mr. Edwards's account of this transaction is detailed, and appears to be studiously accurate, although some

some constructions have been put upon it by partial or uninformed writers; imputing, as an act of sedition and licentiousness to the inhabitants, that dignified resistance to oppression in their governors, which all just theorists have established as the unalienable right of the governed. I believe there was no doubt as to the pleasure of the crown, although it probably might have been made known to Governor Park, as usual in cases of dismissal from office, not in the peremptory tone of an absolute recall, but with a delicate intimation that he had his sovereign's permission to resign. Three of the principal persons concerned, who felt too much the justice of their cause to humour the temper or gratify the venality of a commissioner directed by the crown to report as to the criminality of this procedure, were sent to England, and for some time confined in Newgate. One of these unfortunate gentlemen would probably have suffered death, if he had not taken advantage of the act of grace on

on the accession of King George the First to the throne.

An island, thus zealous in the support of its own freedom, has afforded the first example of a relaxation of the code in favour of slaves, by extending to them the trial by jury in criminal cases. The benevolent and pious endeavours of the Moravian brethren, to convert them to christianity, have also received extraordinary encouragement in this island.

The population of Antigua in 1774 amounted to 2590 whites, and 37,808 slaves. In 1787 it was supposed, by an author residing on the spot, to amount to 5000 whites, and 45,000 negroes and people of colour; but in this account it is perhaps over-rated.

CHAPTER IV.

The author returns by Guadaloupe and Desirada to Barbadoes, and proceeds to Jamaica.—Some description of Kingston.—The Liguanea mountains.—Spanish Town.—The plains on the south side.—St. Thomas in the Vale.

In returning to Barbadoes, I passed along the eastern shore of the low land of Grande-terre, and through the straits which the south point of that division of the island of Guadaloupe forms with the mountains of Desirada. Having been generally favoured, in the former part of my tour through the Charibbean Islands, with a leading trade wind, in effecting this passage I felt the difference of a navigation that requires an incessant struggle with contrary winds and currents. In consequence of this difficulty of proceeding to windward, scarcely any intercourse subsists

subsists between these islands and Jamaica, from whence the latest intelligence is often received by a circuitous route through England. The voyage, however, from the Windward Islands to Jamaica I found remarkably easy and pleasant. On reaching the Alta Vela rock, which lies off a promontory, the most advanced southern point of St. Domingo, a little to the eastward of the line of division between the original French and Spanish territories in that island, we found in the middle of the winter a cool and lively breeze; and as we coasted along the mountainous and nearly deserted shore of this devoted country to its south-western limit, it freshened almost to a gale. In the evening we took our departure from the high land, trending towards Cape Tiburoon, with the hopes of gaining a view on the next morning of the island of Jamaica.

Accordingly, after sun-rise we observed, at a great distance to the westward, the Blue Mountains of Jamaica, distinguished by their pyra-

pyramidical apex, called *Johnny Crow* hill, and rising occasionally into view above the haze and floating vapours which concealed the great body of the island. This haze or moisture in the atmosphere, so remarkable in the West Indies, and particularly with the wind at east, or east inclining south, renders the distant or elevated objects indistinct, and sometimes, on the remoter view, of a blueish colour. It was rarely, during my short stay in Jamaica, that I observed the tops of the Blue Mountains free from the surrounding vapour. As we approached this lofty scene, the first part of the shore distinctly visible was a narrow slip of land covered apparently with wood, and running eastward from the base of the mountains into the sea. It is called Point Morant or Morante, a Spanish word (which, like many of the original names of places, is still retained in Jamaica); and, if not according to its true etymology, would properly describe the *delay* and difficulty experienced by homeward-bound ves-

sels

sels in beating up to it from Kingston, a distance of not more than forty miles.

With a favourable gale from the north we glanced rapidly along the coast, and were flattered with the hope of reaching the harbour in a few hours. But pleasure is not generally the offspring of expectation in this life. As we came under the influence of the high land, the strength of the wind suddenly remitted, and the angry ocean subsided till it was a perfect calm; whilst at some distance to the westward several vessels appeared stretching towards us with a breeze from the opposite quarter. The pause which now ensued afforded me an opportunity of surveying the shore at hand: but, excepting some small cliffs of calcareous rock, called "The White Horses," nothing appeared facing the sea but a grand, sombre, and uncultivated breadth of mountains; not enlivened with conical mornes and luxuriant woods, like those of Martinique or Dominica, where the coffee plantations are occasionally

sionally seen on the heights, and cane fields on the margin of the water; but it was all one brown, continued and imposing desert.

Impatient to be on shore, and from the short distance of the mouth of the harbour, as it was indicated in that point of view, between two smaller hills I quitted the ship a little before sun-set to proceed in the boat. But the approach of night soon intercepted the view of Port Royal harbour; and after many hours rowing, embarrassed with the apprehension of the *keys*, with which our men were unacquainted, we could distinguish nothing but the dark bulk of the mountains, whilst the roar of the breakers reverberated from their sides cautioned us against approaching the shore. The night was fortunately pleasant, and unattended with the accustomed wind blowing off shore, which might have carried us out to sea. To our satisfaction, about midnight the moon arose above the mountains, with that serenity and placid light, which sometimes distinctly exhibits

exhibits in this latitude the convexity of its orb, and we were visited only by a gentle breeze impregnated with the aromatic fragrance of the woods.

Pursuing an eastern course, as you approach Kingston, the body of the mountains seems to recede from the line of coast, leaving a large plain on the south, and a bason or harbour in that quarter separated from the sea by a sandy strip of land called the *Palisadoes*, on the extremity of which are situated the town and fort of Port Royal.

In proceeding to speak of this important island, I shall endeavour to contract my views within as narrow a range as possible, such as may be indulged to the cursory and familiar observation of a tourist. My visit to the island was too short to admit of any thing more than a superficial glance at some few interesting scenes; and I am too sensible of the fallacious ground on which I should tread, when trusting to the information of

strangers, to hazard those general remarks on an extensive field of inquiry, which attempted by more competent writers on the spot are not exempt from the strongest imputations of inaccuracy or uncertainty.

On entering the harbour I passed through part of the squadron of the royal navy on this station, and proceeded towards Kingston, which lies on the south side of an arid plain, at a short distance from the foot of the mountains, receding from this level country, called the Liguanea (or Ligany), in the form of a crescent with the convex side of the figure projecting northwards.

The city of *Kingston*, on the northern side of the harbour, is laid out with regularity, the streets intersecting each other at right angles, and sloping towards the sea. The lower, the most compact and populous, part of the city is principally built of brick; and in some part of the transverse streets, or those running parallel with the shore of the bay, the upper stories of the houses are placed on

piazzas

piazzas or arcades, which, if carried to a greater extent, would very much contribute to the comfort and refreshing coolness of the place. The soil is of a light or sandy nature, and when agitated by a strong breeze becomes extremely inconvenient in the streets.

It seems extraordinary that the most important and opulent town in the West Indies should be liable to the imputation of being unpaved. Indeed, I have heard many of the inhabitants confess with pleasantry and self-reproach, but in a spirit of liberality which confers infinitely more honour than could be derived from the credit of any local improvement, that their streets, so negligent has been the police, may be almost said to have been paved with *glass bottles*. However, from the recent incorporation* of Kingston, which now ranks as a city, there is every reason to suppose it will be soon (if not

* By charter, bearing date January 12, 1803.

 already)

already) essentially ameliorated in this respect.

An extensive parade or square occupies the higher part of Kingston, on the north of which are situated the barracks, and on the south a brick parish church. The area of this place is uneven, and the houses on each side do not appear to be uniform or connected. The most agreeable, though least inhabited, part of the town is in the northerly side, where it advances into the country, in which quarter I observed some large and well-constructed houses. Kingston is said to contain between twenty-six and twenty-seven thousand souls. From a slight and very imperfect acquaintance with the towns through which I passed in the West Indies, I confess that, setting aside that hospitality of which they partake in common with the country, I have found very little in them to command my encomiums or excite my admiration. This perhaps may be in some measure owing to the predominant complexion

plexion of their population. Certainly there are also many local disadvantages which I before enumerated, and others which may be assigned, for the unfavourable appearance of their buildings in the West Indies. Yet the local obstacles may not be insurmountable, as the French, who generally fixed their abodes in the colonies for life, could boast of some handsome towns. They are said to have been more attentive to the construction and embellishment of their houses. Cape François and some other of their principal towns have been remarked by impartial observers as possessing a decided superiority to those of the English. Of this, however, I had no opportunity of forming any judgement.

Immediately on entering the country I found Jamaica in one convenience could boast a manifest pre-eminence, when compared with the other islands I had seen, in the excellence of its public roads. The dry weather which had prevailed might have been favourable to my impres-

sion, but I thought the western turnpike road, leading on the south side of the island through Spanish Town, might be ranked with the best highways I had seen in Europe.

Owing to the number of pens or pasture grounds with which this part of the island abounds, the face of the country is also materially different from the windward islands before described; and I believe I may correctly say, I travelled nearly twenty miles in one of the most populous parts of Jamaica, without passing by a single sugar plantation. From Kingston every one must be naturally tempted by the coolness and vicinity of the Ligany mountains to pay them an early visit; and I was the more solicitous to undertake this journey (if a morning's ride may be so called), as I was in hopes it might afford me a specimen of the beauty of the interior country. Rising before day, it is necessary for those who are not inured to the sun's heat to reach the foot of the mountains before it appears; for it is usual to ascend them

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on horseback, and even the temperature of climate they afford is not perfectly adapted to a British constitution. The country near Kingston wore a very sun-burnt appearance after a severe drought; but as I approached the mountains the scenery became totally changed, and extremely pleasing to the eye. The rich soil of the Ligany was covered with cane fields, which gently rose in an inclined plane to the perpendicular cliffs and basement of the ridge of mountains, exhibiting a picturesque contrast of lively green with the brown impending desert. The fertility of this part of the Ligany is greatly promoted by a stream issuing from the mountains, which from its elevation above the plain affords the means of irrigating the cultivated lands below. At the foot of the first hill, seven or eight miles from Kingston, it is necessary for all those proceeding northward to quit their carriages, and continue their route on horseback. The road, however, for some miles appeared by no means impassable

passable for a carriage, and I rode up the ascent through the woods with much ease and satisfaction. On quitting the plain you quit also the cultivated country; and although on the first risings you may now and then catch a glance at the vivid cane fields beneath, yet, as you advance, one desert hill clothed in wood succeeds another, leaving dark, wild, and romantic vales between them. But the scenes after a first impression have little novelty to excite surprise, or variety to enliven their beauty. At a certain elevation the trees, as in all mountainous countries, become dwarfish, till, as you continue ascending, they dwindle into bushes. To mount, therefore, to their summits can be a matter of little curiosity to any other than the botanist or enthusiastic admirer of nature; and indeed at a great elevation (as I have experienced on the Alps), from the indistinctness with which the objects are seen below, the picturesque beauty of the whole is very much lost in the extreme diminution of the parts. After having

having reached a considerable height, the climate became cool and grateful, and I found myself involved in a thick fog. As the sun rose, however, it cleared away, and the air was singularly fine with a light breeze at north-west. The prospect before me affording nothing for the most part but a scene of wild woods and bleak uninhabited mountains, I turned towards the south, and beheld Kingston in a most majestic and expanded view below me. A beautiful enclosed plain, enlivened by cultivation, occupied the intermediate and spacious landscape; beyond it appeared the ocean, glistening to an immeasurable extent, while the brown inaccessible mountains darkened the fore ground of the picture. Although the sun was some hours high, the thermometer had not risen beyond seventy-two, and I was enabled to walk the greater part of the forenoon with little inconvenience from the heat. Within these few years past the number of coffee plantations has been very much augmented

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in the island of Jamaica; which, amongst other causes, is attributed to the influence, and example of the French emigrants from St. Domingo. It appears obvious from the vast tracts of uncleared land in the mountains, where the climate is favourable to the production of coffee, that these plantations will become multiplied to a great extent. In the south-western district of the island, I understood that the rapid increase of coffee estates within the last twelvemonth would justify this expectation. In the part of the Ligany mountains which I visited, some tracts of ground, rough and unpromising to appearance, had just been cleared for this purpose, and at no great distance to the south-east two very large and flourishing plantations have been within a few years established. But when a new source of profit is opened in this, as in every part of the New World that I have seen, so eager is the spirit of enterprise and emulation, that much individual embarrassment usually attends

tends those speculations which essentially advance the general prosperity. The total amount of the exports of coffee from Jamaica, during the last year, ending the 30th of September 1802, amounted to near 18,000,000lbs.; which is nearly one-fourth more than the exports of that article during the preceding year.

From the Ligany mountains I beheld, over a continued and undulating range of high land, the spiral point of the Blue Mountains, at that time free from clouds. The utmost height of the peak is stated by Mr. Edwards at seven thousand four hundred and eighty-three feet. I was informed, however, but I do not know with what exactness, that it did not exceed seven thousand and sixty-seven. At half this elevation the trees, consisting principally, I believe, of the juniper cedar and mountain mango, are of a diminished growth compared with those of the lower region; but various species of shrubs, resembling the myrtle, clothed the mountains

tains to their summits. A general topographical view of Jamaica is given by an intelligent observer, which, as it affords a distinct and accurate idea of it, I will transcribe.

"The island," he says*, "is of an irregularly oval form, narrowest towards its extremities. It lies indirectly east and west; and from one point to the other it is computed to be about one hundred and seventy miles, and between fifty and sixty in its extreme breadth. The interior is principally occupied by an assemblage of bold and lofty mountains, of various heights, shapes, and directions, and intersected by corresponding valleys. These mountains are chiefly covered with thick impenetrable woods, though many of them have been cleared and cultivated; and the valleys are universally in a state of cultivation, except where, from the nature of the soil, they are incapable of being rendered

* Lempriere on the Situation, Climate, and Diseases of Jamaica.

useful

useful in that way. The principal ridge of these mountains runs east and west, and forms a barrier between the north and south sides of the island, admitting of no communications, if we except narrow breaks over the mountains, but by two defiles of no very considerable breadth, which are commanded by two adjoining heights. The mountains afford plains on the south side, in some places of about eight or ten miles between their termination and the sea, in others not so much, and on the north side the breadth of the plains is still less. Their extent consists principally of their length, which on the south side in some parts is very considerable. It is on these plains, or at the foot of the mountains, that all the towns and villages are placed."

From Kingston a wide and excellent road leads through the pens or pasture grounds, along the plain on the south side of the mountains in a westerly direction. At about six miles from the town you cross a large

morass

morass or *lagoon*, as it is called in the language of the country; and pursuing the same road about six or seven miles further you arrive at *St. Jago de la Vega*, the seat of government, usually called Spanish Town. At a small distance from the town you pass over the Rio (or river) Cobre, which issues from the north through a defile of the Ligany mountains, about three miles from Spanish Town, and winds, as its name (derived, I presume, from *coluber*, a serpent) imports, towards Port Royal harbour. The water when I passed was low, but the banks on each side bore evident traces of its occasional height and impetuosity.

Spanish Town, founded by Diego the son of Columbus about the year 1520, is the most antient town in the British West Indies. It is situated on an elevated part of the plain south of the mountains, at a small distance from the Rio Cobre, on its western bank, and a few miles from the entrance of that river into the bay on the west of Kingston.

In

In the southern prospect appear two or three small hills, which intercept the view of the sea; and on the north you behold the continuation of the chain of nearly uncultivated mountains, but not of the same height or grandeur as in the vicinity of the city. The most remarkable feature in Spanish Town is the square, which occupies its centre. A large and stately brick building with a portico, the columns and vestibule of which are of white marble, fronts on the westerly side of the area. It is named the King's House, and was built, at the expense of the island, for the accommodation of the Governor and his attendants. One side of the interior of this edifice is occupied by a spacious hall and gallery, designed for public occasions; the rest is distributed in apartments for domestic uses, with a suit of offices running parallel with the principal structure in the rear. The present Governor prefers, however, to this stately mansion a rural retirement, about three miles distant, on the south towards the

sea, when the duties of his station admit of his absence from the seat of government. A range of public buildings under the same roof, with arcades in front, and divided into offices for state purposes, and the sessions of the Legislative Assembly and Supreme Court of the Island, face the King's House, and extend along the opposite side of the square. One of the corresponding sides is occupied by a colonnade, in the centre of which stands a handsome pedestrian statue, erected to the memory of Lord Rodney, in gratitude for his services and attachment to this island.

The town, consisting of between five and six hundred houses, is not irregularly laid out: but the streets are unpaved, and in some parts narrow and confined; whilst a want of comfort, neatness, and uniformity in the houses, and general aspect of the place, will render it unpleasing to those accustomed to the style of life and cleanliness of a northern climate. Spanish Town, however, during the sessions of the Legislature, assembles all the princi-

pal

pal gentry of the island; and these tropical inconveniences are compensated and forgotten by the ease, hospitality, and lively intercourse which periodically gladden the seat of government of this opulent island. The population of Spanish Town was stated to me, I do not know with what exactness, at about 3000 souls, a great proportion of which number consists of people of colour. Some of the old houses were built by the Spaniards of brick, and, as a security against those earthquakes by which they are sometimes shaken to their foundations, are supposed to have been underlaid with beams of lignum vitæ.

The parish church of St. Catharine, constructed of brick, stands on the eastern side of the town, at a small distance from the river. It was erected in the year 1720, on the site of an old Spanish structure, and has nothing remarkable in its exterior: but on looking through the interior of this church, amongst the venerable remains of the gover-

nors of Jamaica, I observed an epitaph, which I select from those better known, owing to its antiquity, and, I believe, historic truth. It is inscribed on one of the stones constituting the pavement of the altar piece, as follows;

Mistake not, Reader—Not only the deceased Remains of the Honorable Sir Thomas Modyford, Bart. but even the Soul and Life of all Jamaica, who first made it what it now is—Here lies the best and longest Governor, the most considerable Planter, the ablest and most upright Judge, this Island ever enjoyed. He died the 2d of Sept. 1679.

I was struck also with the following animated character of a distinguished advocate:

Near this Place are interred
The Remains of
HUGH LEWIS, Esq.
Barrister at Law, Advocate General for this Island, and
Representative in Assembly for the Parish of Port Royal.
He was born the 3d *August* 1753;
He died the 23d *January* 1785.

Early

Early and zealously attached to the Profession of the Law,
Which Nature had prepared him to adorn,
He cultivated her partial Endowments
With unremitting Assiduity:
To a Voice clear and strong,
To Action graceful and affecting,
He added Knowledge the most accurate and extensive:
Superior, both from Integrity and Abilities,
To the Meanness of Sophistry,
His Arguments at the Bar were rational and forcible,
His Eloquence in the Senate dignified and persuasive.
Though his Merit raised him with unusual Rapidity
To the highest Honors of his Profession,
Yet such was his Liberality and Condescension,
So truly benevolent was he and sincere,
That he enjoyed the uncommon Felicity
to be
Unenvied by any;
The Delight and Admiration of all.

The profession of the law would have rewarded such pretensions with an ample fortune; for it is esteemed extremely lucrative in this island. The principal business at present rests entirely in the hands of four or five distinguished barristers.

If the masters at certain periods of the years devote themselves in Spanish Town to the toils and exertion of business, I must not omit to mention the extraordinary exemption from them enjoyed by their slaves during my short residence in this town. After Christmas, for several successive days, nothing was heard through this merry metropolis but the squeaking of fiddles, and the shouts and laughter of numerous throngs, which encircle two or three distinguished buffoons and dancers belonging to every party. These select personages, who, like satyrs and bacchantes, with the most animated gestures and grotesque movements volunteer their exertions for the amusement and admiration of the lookers-on, generally ornament their sable figures with tinsel or awkward finery, and represent the characters of kings or heroes. A person must be dead to all sympathy who does not feel roused by the general sentiment of obstreperous joy that pervades the country.

The

The effects, however, I understood, are some times severely felt by the negroes, from the inflammation kindled in their blood by violent and unremitted exertions.

The scenery of the flat in the vicinity of Spanish Town, where a great deal of land, which has been cleared, is suffered to grow up in coppice wood, is not unpleasing. Through a great extent of this plain the soil consists of the brick mould of Jamaica, perfectly adapted by nature for the manufacture of bricks. The pasture grounds, or fields, are surrounded by a strong and convenient fencing of the blades of pengwyn*, occasionally intermixed with trees, much in the style of English hedge-rows. The coppice woods abound with the *cashaw*†; and on each side of the road I observed the fragrant *poponax*, and the prickly tubes or stalks of a common species of *cactus*‡. I should not omit to mention the majestic silk cotton trees, which

* Bromelia pinguin. † Mimosa cinerea.
‡ Cactus Peruvianus.

often

often remain, as well as the *cassia*, although the poet has interdicted them :

" Nor let his nectar, nor his silken pods,
The sweet-smell'd cassia or vast *ceiba* spare*."

One of these magnificent ceibas forms almost a complete canopy, with its branches, over the wide road from Spanish Town to Kingston.

The birds which you commonly find on the plains are the mocking bird, a sort of gregarious blackbird, and the Turkey buzzard, or carrion crow of Jamaica, which is esteemed of so much consequence in cleansing the country from putrefying animal substances, that its life is protected by a law of the island. This large and tame bird of the vulturine species abounds in the fields. At sun-rise it appears generally to seat itself near the road on the limb of a tree, *atque alas pandere ad æstivum solem*—drying its feathers after the dews of night preparatory to its flight.

Most of our domestic animals imported

* Grainger's Sugarcane, lib. i.

into

into Jamaica have become naturalized, and thrive apparently as well as in England. Some parts, particularly the parish of St. Anne on the north side of the island, where the herbage under the influence of seasonable rains is more luxuriant, are esteemed favourable to the increase of black cattle. But the effect of the heat on several northern strangers was remarkable. I saw a black horse in a friend's stable, which in the course of a few months had become perfectly brown; and many of the imported sheep in his pen were half stript of their wool, which becomes gradually converted into hair. Of the tame fowls, galenas and turkeys seem most prolific, and best suited to the climate.

I travelled some distance along the south side from Spanish Town, and then proceeded towards the mountains. The scenery of the plains was much the same; but the Ligany and Blue Mountains, uniting to appearance in the distant view, assume a more majestic character

character as you recede from Spanish Town. The brown angular and sterile projections of the latter, harmonizing with the woods of the Ligany and softened with a blue haze, seem to constitute one unbroken mass, which is capt by the clouds.

The cane fields which I passed through in this part of the island wore a most unpromising aspect, owing to the severity of a long, though not unusual, drought. Nothing can be more tantalizing than the prospect by which the inhabitant of the south side of the island is incessantly deceived; for, during the serenity of the sky and that steadfast glare of sunshine which consumes his canes, the hills, at the distance literally of a few hundred yards, are for days involved in clouds brought down by the trade wind, and refreshed by plentiful rains. Not a drop for many months had been felt on the plain, whilst I observed the sky continually lowering and shedding torrents of rain over the mountains,

mountains. It is said that scarcely three crops in five are spared in this quarter of the island by the droughts.

But the ride in a northern direction, through the defile of the mountains near Spanish Town, called the 'sixteen miles walk,' presents a more gratifying scene. It is shown as one of the first objects of curiosity to a stranger who visits this part of the country; and though, like all the grander passages in nature, it peculiarly excites our efforts to represent it, yet I feel too much the feeble and limited powers of description to think, by a correct and adventurous outline, to communicate any just idea of the variety, the strength and subtlety of the different combined objects which produce the great effects in picturesque scenes. After passing four or five miles of the plain, or savannah, as it is termed, at the approach or entrance of the mountain on the left you observe the effect of the Rio Cobre issuing into the plain, where it has washed away the soil, and wrought its

passage

passage through a deep and extensive ravine. On the right you pass the first projection of the mountains advancing on the plain, interspersed with trees, and consisting of detached masses of calcareous rock, like the ruins of some hoary and embattled walls. The road then appears hewn through a solid ridge of mountains, rising almost perpendicularly on each side of the river, and leaving only a small space for its passage of many miles through these dark and romantic barriers separating the two great divisions of the island. The slopes and cliffs are for the most part covered with wood; but here and there you behold large fragments of the disjointed rocks which have tumbled into the midst of the Rio Cobre, foaming sometimes almost on a level with the road, and sometimes at a considerable depth beneath. What singularly enriched the picture, in my eyes, was the beautiful, new, and various foliage of the woods. But I passed them with too much rapidity to learn or distinguish the different

ferent species of trees of which they were composed. On the north side of this extraordinary pass the strata of rocks, inclining considerably from the level of the river, hang in a naked precipice on the left. A rich view of St. Thomas in the Vale is then unfolded, which, contrasted with the dark and romantic recess from whence you emerge, brings to mind the visionary descriptions of Arabian fables. The landscape of this interior country, surrounded by mountains, is extremely rich and beautiful. It gives one some idea of the green cane fields and undulating hills gently rising one above the other towards the central mountains, which constitute the character of the scenery on the north side of the island which Mr. Edwards has so happily described.

Jamaica is divided into three counties, which are subdivided into twenty parishes, containing thirty-four towns and villages, and consisting altogether of about three mil-

lions and a half of acres, of which scarcely one-fourth part is supposed to be in cultivation. The exports of last year (1802) consisted of 129,544 hogsheads, 45,405 tierces, and 2,403 barrels of sugar; 45,632 puncheons, 2,073 hogsheads, 473 barrels, and 205 kegs of rum; 366 casks of molasses; 2,079 bags and 23 casks of ginger; 7,793 bags and 591 casks of pimento; and 17,961,923 lbs. of coffee. Considering this amount of property, and the many eminent and wealthy families of Jamaica to be met with in every circle of fashion where the English language prevails, it is naturally a matter of some surprise to a stranger, who visits the island, to find it almost totally deserted by its principal inhabitants. In one of the northern and richest districts, it is said that of eighty proprietors not three are to be found at this time on the spot. Their plantations continue under the management of agents, who, to improve their circumstances, submit to a temporary

porary banishment from their homes; whilst all the wealth of the soil is transported and consumed in remote countries.

In the night and early part of the morning I never experienced the least degree of inconvenience from the heat during my stay in Jamaica. But as the day advanced it sometimes grew oppressive, particularly as the wind inclined to the east. It is remarked by the inhabitants, that as the coolness of their winter depends on the northerly winds, the temperature of this season corresponds generally with the state of the weather in North America. As the thermometer in the early part of this year had been deprest to a very unusual degree, as low as 64 in the morning during a north wind near Spanish Town, and several successive cold days had been experienced, it induced us to believe that the winter had been remarkably severe in North America. I was curious, therefore, on my arrival afterwards in Carolina, to make inquiries on this subject; and

and I found that in East Florida and Georgia, about the time alluded to, a few days of rigorous frost had been experienced, though in the more northern parts of America the winter had been esteemed rather mild than severe. From hence one should be led to conclude, that the cold air which was felt in Jamaica must have found its way from the southern parts of the continent. The subject may be a matter of fallible speculation; but as the intra-tropical winds on this side of the equator are ascribed to columns of cold air from the north, which as they advance south, from the increased velocity of the earth's motion on its surface appear to pass over us in a direction inclining easterly, it may be asked, How can the north winds of Jamaica derive their source from a region lying in some degree to the westward of that island? Perhaps it may be accounted for by adverting to the course of the winds in the more northern latitudes. From the whole line of coast of the United States they issue

most

most violently through the winter from the north-west, and, progressing southerly, by degrees assume first a due north and then a north-eastern course. In the Florida stream, a little without the tropic, I encountered for several successive days a strong wind from north and north north-east; and about the same time, as I afterwards heard, a severe gale four degrees to the northward in the same parallel of longitude had been experienced from the north, and in the latitude of 35° still further north from the north west.

After a short stay in Jamaica, I sailed for the Bahama Islands; of which I shall proceed to give a more particular account.

CHAPTER V.

General description of the Bahama Islands.

THE Bahama Islands, which may be said to be connected by Porto Rico and Saint Domingo with the series of Charibbean Islands, lie at a considerable distance to leeward of them, in a diagonal line, running south-east and north-west, nearly seven hundred miles in extent, between the seventy-first and eighty-first degrees of west longitude, and the twenty-first and twenty-eighth degrees of north latitude. From the names given by the aborigines to the two largest islands situated at the north-western extremity of the range, they have been sometimes called the *Lucayas**, or more generally *Bahamas.*

* Or Lucayos. The Spanish geographers, speaking of the Lucayos in the earliest accounts, confine them to

hamas. The greater islands, or rather groupes of islands, may be esteemed fourteen in number. The smaller, it has been computed, amount to at least seven hundred; though I suspect an exact enumeration of them, from the intricacy and subdivision of many of the islands comprehending rocks and sand-banks, would be an undertaking scarcely worth the labour.

Although the geographical divisions of the globe are generally founded on some ana-

to three different clusters, lying east of the Florida stream, and admitting three distinct entrances into it, at present called the Providence, the Santareen, and the Nicholas Channels. Under this subdivision the Lucayos were described as the *Bahamas*, the *Organos*, and the Islands of the Martyrs. Herrera, vol. ii. chap. 5.—It occurred to me, on recollecting the *Leucadia* of the antients, that these islands, which are also remarkable for a white calcareous rock, might have derived their name from the same quality. *Lucaya* or *Yucaya*, however, is an Indian word; and it is said the islands were generally called *Lucayas* by the natives.

logy between the component parts, as the Charibbean Islands, which may be classed together from their volcanic appearance, and the similarity of their climate and natural productions, it occurred to me, before I visited the Bahama Islands, that on passing the north tropic, and traversing so great an extent of ocean as they occupy, some marked and essential differences would be found between the islands at the two extremities of the chain; but in this I was deceived; for, I believe, there are strong characteristic resemblances in climate, figure, soil, and in the animal, vegetable, and fossil kingdoms, which may properly serve to unite them in the same family. Lying, as they do, in one of the most serene, genial, and (through a great part of the year) delightful climates in the world, and yielding by cultivation most of the vegetable productions of the temperate as well as of the torrid zone, it might seem strange that they have not hitherto become generally settled. But from the intricacy of

the

the navigation between them, as well as the unproductive nature, or rather deficiency, of the soil, they have attracted, perhaps, less notice than any other parts of the British empire: I therefore determined to see as much of them as time and circumstances would admit, though with little other incentive or qualification than curiosity to direct my inquiries.

These small oblong bodies of land, bounding the Atlantic Occean on the north-east of the large island of Cuba, and reaching over an extent of ocean commensurate with its length, rise almost perpendicularly from an immense depth of water, and seem to have been formed, if external appearances may be trusted, from an accumulation of shells or small calcareous grains of sand. The land generally seems low, and its surface and figure throughout the islands is very nearly the same. At the utmost depths to which the inhabitants have penetrated, nothing has been

found but calcareous rock, and sometimes an intermixture of shells. At a small distance from the shores a reef of rocks in many of the islands is observed to follow the direction of the land, and form the boundary of the soundings: without this rampart the ocean is often immediately unfathomable; within it, the bottom is either of a beautiful white sand, or chequered with heads (as they are termed) of rocks covered with sea-weed.

The principal islands, or clusters of islands, to enumerate them in their longitudinal inclination from south-east to north-west, are:

1. Turks Islands.
2. The Caucus or Caicos.
3. The Heneagas.
4. Mayaguana.
5. Crooked Island Groupe.
6. Long Island.
7. Watlings.
8. The Exumas.

9. St.

9. St. Salvador.
10. Eleuthera and Harbour Island.
11. Providence.
12. Andros.
13. Lucaya or Abaco.
14. Bahama.

Besides these islands, there are two extensive sandbanks which underlay a wide expanse of ocean, called the Great and Little Bahama Banks, the boundaries of which are in many places marked by an indefinite number of quays* and islets.

The

* Quays are described as "small sandy islands appearing a little above the surf of the water, with only a few bushes or weeds upon them, and abounding (especially at any distance from the main) with turtle and amphibious animals. Turtle choose the quietest and most unfrequented places for laying their eggs, which are to a vast number in the season, and the quays would be seldom seen but for this, except by pirates. Vessels from Jamaica and the other governments make voyages to them, called Turtling. Some quays which have been in continual view, as those nigh

The Bahamas will be ever remarkable in the history of the New World, from having been first discovered by Columbus, on an expedition of the greatest enterprise and importance that was ever undertaken on the seas. At that time they were filled with inhabitants, who welcomed his arrival on their humble shores with pleasure and hospitality. But in a few years, as I shall have occasion to mention more particularly in the sequel, these islands were completely depopulated and forsaken till the conclusion of the American war; since which they have afforded many of the distressed royalists a precarious and, perhaps, temporary settlement.

The principal produce of the islands consists of cotton, salt, turtle, different species

nigh Jamaica, are observed within our time to be entirely washed away and lost, and others daily wasting." Introduction to a General History of the Pirates, by Capt. Johnson, page 24.

of

of fruit, mahogany, dyeing and other woods or barks. A considerable source of profit is found by the maritime part of the community, in administering to the distresses of those who are wrecked upon the numerous rocks and shoals with which these islands are beset.

Providence, being the present seat of government, concentrates all the trade and consequence of the islands; and to this place I naturally directed my course, as the principal object of curiosity and source of information: but the want of any immediate communication, which detained me some considerable time in the out islands, afforded as well the opportunity of examining what occurred most worthy of observation where I remained, as of collecting information near at hand, respecting the islands which I passed without personal observation. Of one or two of these islands my tour will furnish a particular account; and

and, I believe, from the great analogy they bear each other, a pretty correct general idea of them all. But I will notice the principal islands before enumerated, and a few of the others as they engaged my attention in sailing through them towards Florida, beginning at the south-eastern extremity, where they approach St. Domingo.

CHAPTER VI.

Turks Islands.—Origin of this name.—The process of making salt.—Dispute relative to the colonial government of these islands.

It may be said with respect to many of the Bahama Islands, that you have your choice of three names, given to them at different periods of time, by the English, the natives, and the Spaniards. The *natives* generally described them by some peculiarities which at present cannot always be learnt; for their language has almost perished with their race. The denominations of the *Spaniards*, which appear in the older charts, seem to have been arbitrary, and, like their dominion over them, but transitory. The few English names which may be traced are founded on some natural allusion made by our sailors, to whose roving and intrepid spirit we are indebted for this colony; its sands and rocky

shores, abandoned and avoided by other nations, affording them for many years a favourite and congenial retreat. To them we may ascribe the present denomination of this small cluster of islands. In the old charts they are called *Las Amanas* by the Spaniards, who derived that name, I believe, from the natives. They abound with a dwarfish species of the cactus (*cactus coronatus* or *cactus nobilis* of the botanists), vulgarly called the *Turk's head*, from a most striking and singular resemblance the plant bears to a Turkish cap; which circumstance must have given rise to the present appellation *. One otherwise would be as little likely to guess at their proper location, as a post-master in England, who, not having heard of any colony of the Grand Seignior in the West Indies, sent off a letter directed, some years

* In the French charts they are called *Les Isles Turques*; and perhaps the French may be the authors of their present name.

ago,

ago, to a person in the *Turks Islands*, to Constantinople.

These small islands are of some consequence in this government, from the quantity of salt they produce in natural ponds. The calcareous rock, of which the land is composed, lies generally in horizontal layers. From the violent action of the sea, which has evidently, and perhaps recently, beaten over them, the surface every where appears worn, fretted, and broken into holes, or often deep excavations: hence the ocean water finds a passage, and has formed in many parts of the interior extensive *salinas* or ponds. Although the inhabitants of the other islands, perhaps, amongst other causes, owing to a more northern position, have not hitherto much attended to the great natural advantage of their salt ponds, little doubt seems at present entertained of their becoming a source of considerable profit, from the quantity of salt produced, and the facility with which

which it may be obtained. For early in the year, when the power of the sun begins to increase, accompanied with dry weather, the salt every where in these natural ponds begins to crystallize and subside in solid cakes. It remains then only to break the crystals, and rake the salt on shore; and by this easy mode a single labourer may rake from forty to sixty bushels of salt in a day. The process, however, is facilitated by making small pans, which as the salt is taken out may be replenished with brine from the pond. The two principal ponds from whence the salt is obtained in this cluster of islands lie at that which is called the *Grand Turk*, and at a smaller island called *Salt Key*, on the south side of it.

The island called Grand Turk may be about twelve miles long, and, at a mean, two miles broad from east to west. The soil, which is sandy, admits but of little cultivation, and produces only a small quantity of

Guinea

Guinea corn, an agreeable and nutritious grain, which is universally cultivated throughout the Bahamas.

The principal pond on the island is considerably more than a mile in length. There are also some of less note, and particularly one near a harbour on the east side of the *Grand Turk*, from whence some small quantity of salt is obtained.

The resident inhabitants are few in number. Before the American war they amounted to about eighteen white heads of families and forty slaves; since which period there probably has been little increase. I mention the *resident* inhabitants; for in the early part of the year, when the salt begins to make, a number of periodical visitants, from the *Bermudas*, come over for the purpose of raking it. All those who are present on the tenth of February being enumerated, allotments of the ponds are made, and staked off to each person in proportion to the number of hands given in to be employed in raking

ing salt for the ensuing season. The amount of these annual visitors cannot be calculated with precision. Early this year two hundred had arrived; and I was informed they sometimes number between one and two thousand. The pans which the salt-rakers generally lay out are not all of equal dimensions, but depend on each individual's judgment or experience. I saw, elsewhere, some nearly sixty feet square; from whence it was calculated, I do not know with what exactness, that at least five hundred bushels of salt might be raked in a good season. But in Turks Islands the pans are generally smaller: they are filled with the brine about six inches deep, or so as to cover a man's ancles, and a moveable machine, like the wheel of a water-mill, but turned by a handle, throws the water from the pond into a gutter, from which the pan is conveniently and readily supplied*.

* The salt now (March 1803) sells at one shilling and eightpence sterling per bushel on the spot.

The

The Spaniards, who first discovered these islands, more intent on the search of gold than of salt, passed on to *Cuba* and *Hispaniola* without effecting any settlement. It is little more than a century since they have been first visited or claimed by the English. The only Europeans who ever contested our pretension to the possession were the French: they attacked it some years ago without success. The right was afterwards discussed by the courts of the respective countries, and the claims of the possessors admitted and sanctioned by the French government.

A free port is established at the Turks Islands, which admits the Americans, their principal customers, to carry away the salt in their own bottoms, subject to a duty of two shillings and sixpence Bahama currency (eight shillings to the dollar) per ton, payable to the crown. The receipts of the last year, at the office of the customs, amounted to two thousand two hundred and thirty pounds sterling. The colonial government has also

imposed

imposed a further duty on all salt exported: but an exemption is strenuously claimed by the inhabitants; who disavow any connection with the Bahamas, and, although called upon by a law of the colony to delegate a representative to the assembly of the Legislature at Providence, have totally refused to recognise its authority. The circumstance of the annual migration of most of the inhabitants, the distance from the seat of the Bahamas' government, and the trade wind, which, though favourable to reach Providence, renders the reciprocal communication both difficult and tedious, are reasons urged in favour of the convenience of attaching them to the colony of the Bermudas. It is also insisted that his Majesty has sanctioned them in a sort of palatinate government, by appointing a person to reside there in the character of an agent of the crown. On the other side it is strongly contended, that this is merely a factious attempt to call in question a legitimate authority from motives of private convenience,

venience, which has eternally disgraced and embroiled our infant colonies. The question (which cannot be of very difficult solution if the right is merely precarious) is submitted to the proper tribunal, the King in council, and a speedy decision will probably put an end to this political dispute.

CHAPTER VII.

The Caicos.

In proceeding towards Providence, the next collection of islands that you meet with, lying in a north-westerly direction from the Turks Islands, are called *The Caicos*, or, as our sailors more familiarly pronounce them, *The Caucus*. Their name, I believe, is of Indian origin, and may be derived from a species of native plum-tree. They lie in the form of a crescent opening to the south, and are separated from each other by narrow passages. Besides the Keys, or smaller islands, lying south, they are distinguished by the names of the West, the East, the Grand and Middle Caucus. The soil of the middle islands, which have principally invited settlement, (and particularly some spots of clay,) is the most

esteemed of any in the Bahamas. There are two sugar plantations recently established at the Caicos; but the staple commodity produced is cotton. Of the general state of the agriculture of these and the other islands I shall be enabled to furnish a correct idea when speaking more particularly on the subject hereafter, from authentic documents in the proceedings of the Legislature of the Bahamas, on a recent investigation of the subject.

The different West India fruits come to perfection in these islands. I tasted some oranges produced at the Caicos of excellent flavour. Horned cattle, on a comparison with the adjacent islands, succeed well: and I saw some very good hogs bred there; a species of stock which thrives most remarkably in all warm climates.

Previous to the peace of Paris, in the year 1783, when many royalists removed to the Bahamas, there were not more than thirty acres of land cleared in all the Caicos. But

in the course of five years succeeding, twelve heads of families, and between two and three hundred slaves, were enumerated on the islands; since which period I have not learnt the exact amount of the population. One gentleman alone, it is said, has six hundred negroes employed on his different plantations. But there is too much reason at present to anticipate a diminution rather than an increase of numbers. A port of entry is established at the Caicos, but they have not as yet sent any delegate to the General Assembly at Providence. Although the land is rocky and much broken, the indefatigable inhabitants have made roads adapted for carriages; and if nature would smile on their meritorious efforts, it would soon become a populous and flourishing country: but, I am sorry to say, the prospect of the future is wrapt in a gloomy despondence.

Various traces of the aborigines (who in numbers much exceeded any population likely to ensue) have been discovered at the Caicos:

Caicos: amongst others, utensils formed of clay, and a hatchet of stone curiously embossed with a dolphin's head. In a cave some sculls, I was informed, had been recently taken up, which, on being touched, immediately mouldered to dust. An old road traversing one of the islands was also found by the first settlers, which they ascribed to the Indians; for the Spaniards, although they exterminated the inhabitants, were indifferent about their country, which they deemed not worth the possession.

CHAPTER VIII.

Heneagas.

In a south-westerly direction from the Caicos lie the two islands of Great and Little *Inagua*, or, as, to accommodate them to an English pronunciation, they are now generally called, *Heneauga* or *Heneaga*. The original is a Spanish compound word, signifying that "*water is to be found there*;" which, to those who frequent the neighbouring scenes of flat and desert keys and sands, is an object of no small consequence.

Great Heneaga has been hitherto but little known from any other circumstance than the number of shipwrecks which it has occasioned by its position at the mouth of the windward passage, the frequented straits between Cuba and Saint Domingo. A dangerous reef lies at some distance off the shore;

shore; and, from the strength and uncertainty of the currents, vessels are continually and unexpectedly driven upon it. In the month of August, in the year 1800, the *Lowestoffe* man-of-war, and eight Jamaica ships, under her convoy, were unfortunately cast away and destroyed on this treacherous coast.

I passed the Great Heneaga on a very boisterous evening in February, towards dusk; and, being carried considerably to the westward of the strait course by a current from the east, had no opportunity of distinctly observing the land, which was low and at some distance. A few days afterwards I was informed that two square-rigged vessels were just cast away on the reef; and it was supposed by the captain of a small wrecking vessel, who gave me the information, and had seen their boats upset, that the crews must have perished in attempting to land. He had endeavoured to approach the wrecks, but was prevented by the violence of the wind, and the

the breakers on the reef intercepting the shore. Little hospitality at that time could have been expected on the island, as it was inhabited by only one fugitive outlaw from *Long Island*, accused of having committed there a wanton murder on his innocent slaves. Some few families, it was said, were on the point of removing this year to Heneaga: for the Bahama Islands constitute as it were a large family; and though dispersed over an extended and thinly-peopled space, their individual projects and concerns are easily known to each other from water communition and the wreckers frequenting their harbours. The new settlers are invited to *Heneaga* principally by the salt-ponds, to which object the inhabitants of the Bahama Islands have this year (1803) very generally turned their attention.

CHAPTER IX.

The Hogsties.—Ragged Island.—Mayaguana.—The French Keys.

The Hogsties.—At the distance of about ten or twelve leagues to the northward or north north-west from Heneaga, are some small keys, with wings or reefs of rocks on each side in form of a horse-shoe, which admit a passage from the east, and form a sort of harbour. They are styled in the French charts "*Les Etoiles*;" and by us, perhaps through reproach, "*The Hogsties.*" Lying as they do in a very frequented part of this sea, I was surprised to find that neither Heneaga nor the Hogsties had as yet been correctly surveyed. They are minutely known only to those persons called wreckers, who are licensed by the Governor of the Bahamas,

Bahamas, and cruise amongst these islands for the benefit of salvage, which they receive on all property they may chance to rescue from the waves. Some cocoa-nut trees have lately been planted on one of these keys, as a warning to mariners; but it is doubted whether the wreckers, whose business it is to prey on the disasters of the unwary, will suffer them to grow up, even should the soil permit. Perhaps, however, this may be a surmise, originating in the prejudices and feelings of many of those who have been unfortunate sufferers by shipwreck, and who generally inveigh against the rapacity of the wreckers*. The merit and utility of a set of

* Happening in the course of one of my passages through the Bahamas to fall in with a wrecker, I held as long a conversation with him as his haste would permit, and was inquisitive on the subject of his occupation. I will set down the dialogue as it took place.

Q. From whence came you?

A. (As it caught my ear) From Providence—last from

of men, however, cannot be denied, who, whatever may be their motive, with alacrity and

from *Philimingo* Bay in *Icumey* (a familiar way of pronouncing *Flamingo* Bay in *Exuma*).

Q. Where are you bound to?

A. On a *racking* voyage to Quby (Cuba) and the westward.

Q. Are there many of you in this quarter?

A. Morgan, I, and Phinander (Fernandez):—parted company awhile ago.

Q. What success in cruising?

A. Middling—but middling.

Q. We have seen very few wreckers to the eastward—are there many to the westward?

A. We lay with forty sail four months along *Floriday* shore.

Q. Forty sail? Then certainly you must have had many opportunities of being essentially serviceable to vessels passing the Gulf stream, by directing them to keep off from places of danger, with which you made it your business to become acquainted?

A. Not much of that—they went on generally in the night.

Q. But then you might have afforded them timely notice, by making beacons on shore, or showing your lights?

A. No,

and courage continually encounter the hardships of a dangerous sea, to preserve the property, and often the lives, of their fellow-creatures from destruction. The inhabitants of the Bahama Islands, previous to the American war, when the loyalists from the southern part of the United States removed to them, and introduced the general cultivation of cotton, were principally engaged in a seafaring life; and, from a lively allusion to the large and beautiful species of shells with which their shores abound, by their visitors were nick-named *Conchs*. These are the persons generally employed, with their slaves, in the occupation of wrecking; and, if the many amusing stories related of them are

A. No, no (laughing): we always put them out for a better chance by night.

Q. But would there not have been more humanity in showing them their danger?

A. I did not go there for humanity: I went *racking*. (In truth, as strong an apology as any that can be suggested for it.)

true,

true, they possess a distinguished share of the address and enterprise of British sailors. It would be a little credulous to pay attention to all the marvellous occurrences, which come to us often exaggerated by the imaginations and vanity of the relators; but I heard a singular adventure from the person to whom it happened, attested by many present who were acquainted with some of the circumstances, which may be worth repeating, as it serves to illustrate as well the hardships and dangers to which the *Conchs* are often exposed, as the resources with which they are enabled to surmount them.—A fisherman at anchor in a boat, while attentively employed in casting his nets at a small distance from the shore of an adjacent island, towards the dusk of the evening was surprised by a sudden gust of wind coming off the land. His boat, notwithstanding all his exertions, was soon driven from her mooring, and, drifting before the wind out of sight of land, was exposed to the swell of an increasing

ing sea, which overtopped and threatened to overwhelm her every instant as it passed. The boat continued, however, to float till the night was somewhat advanced; and, in the awful expectation of his fate, the fisherman, who now had scarcely any thoughts of relief, heard the sound of breakers at a distance. This, which at another time would have excited the greatest alarm, afforded him at that desperate crisis a ray of hope. Scarcely had he begun to distinguish their foam in the darkness of the night, when he found himself plunged into the midst of them, and his boat dashed upon the rocks on the eastern edge of the Great Bahama Bank. At a small distance from these rocks lay a key or bank called *Ragged Island*; and, floating almost senseless on the water, he was flung upon this desolate island. Though now preserved from the waves, there was neither water nor food to be found on the key, which produced only a few fruitless shrubs. But as he had been accustomed to dive for conchs,

conchs, which abound in many places on the coasts of the Bahamas, he swam to some distance from the shore, and fortunately, on searching the bottom, discovered a sufficient quantity of these shell-fish for his subsistence. For nearly six weeks he lived entirely on conchs, their liquor supplying the place of water. During that time, having erected a signal on shore, he observed several vessels pass without noticing it: but so well reconciled had this Crusoe become to his desert island, that he declared, when taken off, had his wife been with him he could have lived very happily there for life.

Mayaguana.—The next island, proceeding in a north-west course from Turks Islands, which from its size would attract one's notice, is Mayaguana. Its south-west point lies west-north-west twenty-five leagues from the West Caicos, and eighteen leagues north-east by east from the Hogsties. As yet it is uninhabited, and known only to mariners.

mariners. I met with two or three sailors, part of the crew of a brigantine, which had just been cast away on its eastern point, who rejoiced in effecting an immediate escape in a wrecking-vessel from this wild and inhospitable spot. The Indian name which it bears seems derived from some qualification of the word *Guana*, an animal of the lizard tribe, found in the holes of the rocks in, I believe, all these islands. In the cultivated parts the guanas soon disappear, as they are easily taken, and their flesh is much esteemed by the negroes.

The French Keys.—North-west by north, eight leagues from the south-west point of Mayaguana, lie some dangerous islets called *The French Keys*, which I have noticè from the extreme inaccuracy with which they are laid down in most of the charts. I am not certain how far the bearing, which I have mentioned on the information of an intelligent observer, may be correct; but their actual

actual position, it is to be hoped, will be soon made known by a gentleman* of one of the neighbouring islands, who, from taste as well as local and scientific knowledge, is likely soon to render an essential service to the world, in publishing an accurate survey of these frequented passages through the Bahama Islands.

The winter is not the most agreeable time to navigate these seas; for although the season is not so uniformly boisterous as in the northern latitudes, and the trade-wind, with some tendency to the north, for the most part continues to blow, yet there is great inconstancy in the weather and uncertainty in the currents. I had the fortune in the first part of my voyage to be at sea in a good ship with able seamen; but I was surprised to find that the intricate navigation of these islands is very often undertaken by those who have never visited them before,

* Colonel Douglas, of Crooked Island.

and who, therefore, must in a great measure trust to charts and sailing-instructions to find their way. Such is particularly the case with the Americans; and, in consequence of their temerity, the dangerous passages are strewed with wrecks of their vessels. Nor will the most experienced, from the great variation at this season in the strength and setting of the currents, place their chief reliance on any thing but a *good look-out*, which awakens every one to personal observation.

CHAPTER X.

Crooked Island.—Castle Island.—The author lands at Portland Harbour.—Description of the beach and salt-pond.—General view of the country.—Pitt's Town.—Journey across Crooked Island.—Some account of its natural productions.

Castle Island.—HAVING spent a restless night in partaking of the vigilance and solicitude of the pilot, and poring over our inaccurate charts, I was rejoiced at the sight of some low land, which proved to be Castle Island, about fifteen or sixteen leagues south-west from the French Keys. As the sun rose we discovered at no great distance a large white rock, which appeared not unlike an old castle, and justly gave its present appellation to the key or island lying west of it. It was highly gratifying as we came within a mile or two of the shore to be relieved from a tossing sea; and the bright

strand which surrounded Castle Island had a beautiful effect over the surface of the smooth water, which now became green as we approached the shore. It is extremely satisfactory to the mariner when some natural feature, such as the Castle rock, can be found to denote the land; for by that circumstance alone persons ignorant, as we were, of the general figure of the island can distinguish it with certainty from some smaller islands lying to the west, and named by the Spaniards *Mira per vos*, signifying in their language "take care of yourselves;" an injunction, though necessary amongst these islands in general, yet more applicable to the *French Keys*, the *Hogsties*, and *Mayaguana*.

Crooked Island.—To the north, adjoining Castle Island, lies Crooked Island, described in different charts as Fernandez*,

* This name, I heard, was given to it from the circumstance of a sailor of that name having been wrecked on the coast, who continued for some months alone on the island.

Sumana,

*Sumana**, Fortune Island†, and more recently, I apprehend, Crooked Island. At first the great body of the land was supposed to form one connected island; but, though since dicovered to be separated by a narrow channel, it still retains a name descriptive of a part instead of the whole.

I landed at a beach on the north part of Crooked Island, near a situation designated for a town to be named after Mr. Pitt. At a distance we observed the waving palmettos along the strand of an open bay, the white bottom of which, as we came in, was visible at many fathoms' depth through the transparent ocean. Indeed, so remarkably

* *Atwood's Keys*, a barren strip of land lying twelve leagues east-north-east from the Bird Rock, is more generally described by this Indian name in the French charts, but it is very probably the true original name of Crooked Island.

† This name is applicable to the adjacent key, called *Long Key*.

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is this the case, that sometimes the captains of strange vessels can hardly be prevailed upon to stand in and anchor as near the shore as a just caution would allow them. I walked over the sandy beach to a large pond, on which I was so fortunate as to meet a worthy and respectable planter of these islands, occupied, with his negroes, in laying out the salt-pans for the ensuing season's raking. On my way I passed by a great number of vegetable productions entirely new to me, of which the scientific world, perhaps, needs no description; but the names and properties of which I afterwards took considerable, but often unsuccessful, pains to learn. I observed amongst those I knew particularly, an abundance of the wild lemon, which shot its tendrils creeping along the ground so as to intercept my passage; also a number of bushes (*Gardenia*) described by Catesby, loaded with the seven-year apples, which derive that name from the tedious length of time, near eight

eight months, which the fruit requires to ripen; and the red mangrove, or sea-side grape, as it is commonly called in the West Indies. The beauty and variety of many of these new acquaintances of delicate foliage very much gratified my eyes. I proceeded along the level shore of the pond from whence the inhabitants were then, for the first time, attempting to make salt. It was fringed with button-wood or the limbs of mangroves* interwoven and over-arching the entrance into the adjoining wood. I observed the shells of an amazing number of land-crabs, abounding in most or all of these

* This mangrove is described by Dr. Bancroft, who gives a correct idea of the tree. It arises from several strong ligneous roots which emerge above the surface of the earth two or three yards before they unite at the trunk. From hence several tough shoots germinate, and, descending, take root. As the tree increases in height they become more numerous, and are seen in great numbers descending, not only from the trunk but from its more elevated branches, like so many ropes.—Natural History of Guiana.

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islands on the first settlement. These exuviæ I had suspected were deposited there by the animals at the time of spawning, when they pay their periodical visits to the sea-side and change their shells; but my intelligent companion understood that they had destroyed themselves by drinking the brine. Towards the head of the pond, at that time dry, we perceived the spring from whence it was supplied with water from the sea, insinuating itself at high tides through the rocky bottom.

From the discovery of Columbus for nearly three hundred years these islands had continued almost in a desert state, till at the conclusion of the American war many of the fugitive loyalists from Georgia and South Carolina, who had first taken refuge in East Florida, from the cession of that country to the Spaniards, and the constancy of their attachment to Great Britain, were constrained to emigrate to the Bahamas. The land, being rocky, with a light vegetable dust or mould

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and small timber, was easily cleared o its wood, and found apparently well suited to the cultivation of cotton. In the course of fourteen or fifteen years from this period, forty plantations, with between two and three thousand acres of cotton fields, and one thousand negroes, were enumerated on Crooked Island.

The next day I crossed the salt-pond to the dwelling-house and negro-huts of a plantation situated on an adjoining hill. From this spot the prospect, though wild, was extremely agreeable, commanding a pretty extensive view of the salt-pond, the beach covered with nodding palmettos, and the green bay, called Portland Harbour, on which I landed. A mild and serene sky spread a genial influence over the land, which was clothed with verdure, whilst the agitated ocean at a distance broke over the reef that presented a barrier to its fury along the northern coast. Turning to the east, and perceiving scarcely any trace of population through the expanse of country before me, I was content for some

some time to gaze on the wild magnificence of nature's works, no less delightful from their novelty than variety. Descending then to the plain below, and proceeding over a broken surface of rocks into the interior of the country, I beheld some extensive fields originally planted with cotton, but which, from the failure of crops, were now abandoned, and had become covered with a luxuriant growth of indigenous shrubs and plants, of which the most numerous appeared to be the sage tree (*Lantana*) and the wild tobacco (*Solanum*); and here and there the wild coffee (*Psychotria*). They were frequented only by a small and lively species of the humming bird and the ground dove of the Charibbean Islands (*Turtur passerina*), whose complaining and tender notes were well adapted to the solemnity of a deserted country. The moderation of the heat, and the beauty of many natural productions, are circumstances which undoubtedly tend to make these islands a more agreeable abode to

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an European than any other part of the West Indies. But it was impossible to behold without regret many amiable and industrious planters, who, having been twice driven from their homes, and deluded by a deceitful prospect of prosperity, were now sinking into ruin from which no exertion on the spot could effectually relieve them. Although nature in all these islands spontaneously brings forth many vegetables, both curious and beautiful, she has hitherto refused to resign herself to continued cultivation. The exotics which are introduced seem feebly and unsuccessfully to struggle with cold winds, the droughts, and unfriendly seasons; whilst a crop of hereditary and worthless weeds take possession of the soil prepared for cultivation, and extract all its nourishment to administer fertility, as they decay, to the native and unprofitable forest trees succeeding them, the elemi, silver-leaved palmettos, and hungry aborigines of the rocks.

The north division of Crooked Island is

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an oblong body of land, running about thirty miles eastward or east by south from Pitt's Town to the channel near Acklin's Key, which, stretching something more than the same distance southerly, forms almost a right angle with the northern division of the colony. The breadth of the Bahama Islands, in general, is very inconsiderable compared with their length. I should suppose the mean breadth of Crooked Island is about one-eighth of its length: but the figure is too irregular to admit of any precise admeasurement, being divided on the southern side by a considerable inlet. A bridle road runs along the north shore of Crooked Island from the site of Pitt's Town to *Acklin's* Straits, and a ridge of hills extends in its longitudinal direction through the centre of the island. The best land is found on the top or on the slope of the yoke of hills, and the planters' houses are mostly situated there, with avenues communicating in direct lines with the road.

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The west point of North Crooked Island is extremely well known to all who have taken this passage, from a small bank called the Bird Rock projected at a little distance from the shore, and lying, according to late and exact observations, in latitude twenty-two forty-eight north, and longitude seventy-three fifty-five west. *Pitt's Town*, which has been laid out nearly opposite to the Bird Rock by a worthy and indefatigable gentleman of Providence, the principal planter on this island, is expected from its situation to become a place of some note. One cannot sufficiently applaud the enthusiasm with which plans are projected, and the facility with which the inhabitants of this part of the world can turn their views to new objects of profitable experiment. They measure an extent of country embracing many hundred miles in their speculations, and are as much alive to all its means and relations as profest directors of state affairs. Information is therefore easily obtained; and

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it remains only to exercise a good share of caution in admitting what may turn out to be erroneous. From present appearances there is every reason to hope that *Pitt's Town* will become a station of some importance in the Bahamas. The passage is much frequented by the Americans and Jamaica-men. The packet on her return from Kingston to England touches here with a monthly mail from Europe and Jamaica; and vessels are often seen passing and repassing along its white and sylvan coast, though, from its hitherto uncultivated resources, it scarcely ever happened, during my stay near Pitt' Town, that they were tempted to come to anchor or send a boat on shore. Remote as this situation is from Providence, so much is the distance abridged by the convenience of water-communication, and the loco-motive habits of the planters, that they talk of *going to town*, as they often term a voyage to Providence, with the same familiarity as an inhabitant of Greenwich or Hampstead, of

paying his daily visit to London. Indeed, with the assistance of a good trade-wind, which is rarely wanting, it may be done in less than forty-eight hours; *sèd revocare gradum—hoc opus, hic labor est*; and many arduous days may be required to surmount the winds and currents which oppose a return.

To the south of North Crooked Island runs a long slip of uncultivated land called *Long Key*, containing some extensive salt-ponds, from whence one gentleman, with the assistance of a gang of forty negroes, raked thirty-five thousand bushels of salt during the last season in the space of a few months. This successful beginning had very much excited the emulation of the other planters on Crooked Island when I visited it, and they had lined the shore of the pond near Pitt's Town with pans for the purpose of making a similar attempt in that quarter during the ensuing season, although some apprehensions were entertained of their success to the extent

extent at least of the hopes of many individuals who had embarked in the experiment.

I found the plantations on Crooked Island for the most part deserted; and the proprietors whom I visited were generally in a state of despondence, in an agricultural point of view, as to the future. Some expectations were still entertained of the other part of the colony: whether it is that we are always disposed to prefer what we last see, or "trust most to what we know the least*," according to the opinion of a profound observer of human nature, the planters have either all removed, or talk of removing, to Acklin's Key.

Being detained some weeks at Crooked Island for want of any opportunity to proceed towards Providence, I was glad to embrace an offer which was obligingly made me, of accompanying a gentleman to his plantation on Acklin's Island, of which I had heard so

* Super invisis et incognitis rebus magis confidamus, &c.—Cæsar de Bello Gallico.

much;

much; and I was the more pleased, as in so doing it was necessary to traverse the whole extent of the northern island.

Previous to my departure I took occasion to visit a great natural curiosity, an extensive excavation of the rocks, which, from the singular resemblance of its interior to some old dilapidated structure, very much reminded me of one of Mrs. Radcliff's ruinous and mysterious castles. At the base of a cliff facing the shore, the rock, which is of a loose and friable texture, appears to have been exposed to the violent action of the breakers, and the cavities have been shaped in grotesque figures, and embossed or wrought into holes, every where smoothed by the lambent water. The principal cave is at some few paces from this beautiful grotto, with which it has apparently no communication, and you are obliged to enter it by descending from an aperture in the rock above. Within this cave the devastation of the water, evident in various places through-

out the island, has left more remarkable traces. In some spots the top appears as if completely demolished, in others it is worn and fretted into regular cavities and shapes, giving it an air of Gothic ceiling, and the stalactites and incrustations on the side walls (if they may be so called) have a damp and mouldy appearance, tinged with occasional hues of green and light blue. In various parts the wild fig-trees, which are particularly fond of moisture, have penetrated into the recesses, and shot their bearded roots like clusters of columns on the sides or through the holes in the roof, which admit the light and in some places the sun's rays. It extends in a variety of capricious and romantic figures to a distance which has never been yet traced; and the imagination, prone to the marvellous, has led some persons to believe that it runs nearly across the island. The bottom was covered with a concretion, many feet deep, of some elastic substance resembling mould, but which is not possessed of

of any vegetative power. A philosophic gentleman conceived it was an accumulation for many ages of the dung of the bats which swarm in the dark recesses of this singular cave. Perhaps it might be going too far back for a cause, to ascribe it to a deposit of marine substances at some very remote period by the sea.

After spending a few days in the vicinity of Pitt's Town, I proceeded over the remainder of the island on my way to Acklin's. Few objects occur, however, in a country so recently brought into cultivation, to excite much curiosity by the description or interest in the detail. In a general survey of the natural state of the islands, the most curious and interesting part of the subject would require the observation of a botanist; though a great proportion of the native plants are, I believe, specifically the same as those of the southern islands. In its fossil productions little appears to deserve the attention of the mineralogist but a calcareous rock, at times of the hardness and consistency of Portland stone, but some-

times exhibiting small, loose, and rounded grains on the fracture, and often a concretion of shells preserving part of their organic forms entire. Every where the surface has strong apparent traces of the action of water.

The woods through which I passed were of so small a growth as to appear like one continued and beautiful shrubbery, extending, with little intermission, from the place of my departure to the verge of Acklin's Channel. These diminutive forest trees, which, from the rocky nature of the soil, are mostly of a knotty and stunted growth, are not only remarkable for their delicate foliage but strong aromatic odour, often combined (if I did not mistake the cause) with some rank exhalation from the rocks, similar to what I had remarked amongst large fragments of coral recently taken from a quarry at Barbadoes. In many parts of the country I passed by successive heaps of loose stones thrown together by the aborigines, who, it is supposed, had begun pretty extensively to cultivate the

ground. The population of these islands at the time of their discovery, more than double to what it is now, affords the strongest reason to justify that presumption; since they were not suspected, like their southern neighbours, of subsisting by war, or on the flesh of their own species; and the wild animals in these islands are no where very numerous*.

I saw many heads of their axes, wrought from a siliceous stone not met with in the Bahamas, which had been found among the rocks; but the memorials of their race are too scanty and unsatisfactory to admit of much speculation, as for a long succession of years no individual inhabited this island to preserve even by oral tradition the memory of the past.

On passing over the island I was entertained by a very intelligent gentleman (Co-

* The only tame animals they possessed were, it is said, parrots, and dogs which did not bark. They cultivated some species of grain, probably maize.

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lonel Douglas), whose house, on the top of the ridge of hills, commands a fine view of the sea. Nothing could surpass the beauty and serenity of the morning after my arrival, and I beheld with great pleasure the many curiosities in the vegetable kingdom which Colonel Douglas pointed out to me. In his garden was the *Cactus cochinilifer*, one of the species of plants sent over by Dr. Anderson from the botanic garden at St. Vincent's, which he judiciously conceived might be found worthy the attention of the inhabitants of the Bahamas. The prickly pear grows luxuriantly all over the island; and every appearance would justify an expectation that this plant of the same species might be propagated with success. The cochenille, which subsists upon the fruit, has not however been introduced, and there are as yet no sufficient grounds to pronounce on the probable result of the experiment. The wild pimento, a species of the allspice of Jamaica, is seen in abundance all over the island;

island; and Colonel Douglas showed me the *Canella alba*, or wild cinnamon, which is also a native shrub, though so not common on this island, perhaps from the avidity with which at some former period it was sought after. But the speculative and intelligent planters have not found any of their native shrubs, as yet, objects worthy of their attention; although they seem generally conscious that experiments determining their possible value have not been fully or extensively made. Notwithstanding the unprofitable nature of the before-mentioned productions, the inhabitants on their first settlement were by no means destitute of some valuable resources in the vegetable kingdom. There being no fresh water streams in the island before they had provided themselves with wells, which it is found necessary to dig at a considerable depth in the high situations on the ridge, a sort of the *Anana* (*Viscum caryophylloides maximum*, of the family of mistletoe, described by Sir Hans Sloane), growing

growing on the limbs of various trees (and from that circumstance the French have fancifully called it the *Anana perroquet*), afforded the early visitors, as it did the Indians in Jamaica, and the Maroons their successors in the woods, a supply of rain water, which this plant retains in the compact cluster of its leaves. The small palmetto*, which covers the shores and all the sandy tracts of land in their vicinity, supplied them with an abundant and convenient thatching for their houses, still generally used as a covering for the negro huts. The torch, or *candle-wood* of the islands, as it is called, from a strong bituminous quality of the wood, answered the purpose, in some respects, of candles. The *butter-bough*, another indigenous shrub, and so named from the gloss

* There is another kind of the *palm-tree* common in the low and moist parts of the island, which I believe is called the hog-palmetto, although it does not possess so decidedly the *fan-leaf* or distinctive character of the palmetto.

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or greasy surface of its leaf, was found a very nutritious food for cattle. The *cork-wood* afforded a substitute for cork, used by the negroes principally in setting their nets; and, what was of no small importance to persons exposed in clearing the land to a tropical sun, the *Croton cascarilla** was found almost as effectual in the intermittent fever as Jesuits' Bark.

In riding over his grounds, Colonel Douglas showed me a spot where he was encamped with two or three negroes when first surveying the island before any settlements had been effected on it. He remained for some days totally alone in the wilderness, without a vessel, in case of emergency, to carry him off; yet he felt, as he assured me, not the least apprehension for the fidelity of his slaves, who must have been conscious of his helpless situation. This sense of security at least argued the courage and humanity of the master; but, in these solitary regions, that

* Or Eleutheria, described in chap. xvi.

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superiority of faculties which the negro perceives in the white man overcomes every thought of independence, and, destitute of the means of subsistence by his own unassisted efforts, induces him to look up to his master for security and support. Colonel Douglas had been constantly employed with his whole gang during the early part of the day in destroying the insects which very much affected his cotton this year. After the dangers and difficulties of effecting a settlement in a new country have been surmounted, and the planter has just begun to reap the fruits of his labours, it must be extremely mortifying to find that nature presents obstacles not only unlooked for but insuperable; whilst, having vested his whole capital in a fallacious speculation, he feels himself deprived of the means even of transporting himself and his family from the scene of this unmerited ruin and disappointment. In the years 1788 and 1794 the *chenille* destroyed, it is computed, two-thirds of the crop of

of cotton on this island: and the red bug, an insect no less destructive, notwithstanding every exertion has been made to remove it, has stained the cotton so much in some places this year as to render it of little or no value. Indeed so discouraging are appearances, that it is difficult at present to surmise by what intervention of fortune or change of circumstances many of these islands will be prevented from becoming a second time depopulated.

Of the curious and medicinal plants which are natives of Crooked Island, the following were pointed out to me; viz. the *Palma Christi*, hore-hound, vervains, China root, squills, milk wood (efficacious in the cure of worms), and capillair; also a plant which they call *Tea*, besides various others the names of which were unknown. On an inlet on the south side of this island I visited a ship-yard lately established, where one small vessel has been constructed and another is now on the stocks. The ribs and beams of these

these vessels are of the timber of the country (in that which was building principally mahogany); but there are no trees of such quality and dimensions as will afford a supply of boards and sheathing, which must be imported from North America. The head carpenter was a negro; and two of his young apprentices, negro boys, had entered with such zeal and emulation into the employment, that, stealing at their leisure hours into a secret part of the wood, they had laid the plan of a boat, and nearly finished it in a very good style, before the master had entertained any suspicion of their employment. Indeed the negroes in the Bahama Islands discover, in general, more spirit and exertion than in the southern parts of the West Indies. Something perhaps may be attributed to a more invigorating climate as a physical cause; but I believe more is due to the circumstances in which they are placed. Their labour is allotted to them daily and individually, according to their strength; and

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if they are so diligent as to have finished it at an early hour, the rest of the day is allowed to them for amusement or their private concerns. The master also frequently superintends them himself; and therefore it rarely happens that they are so much subject to the discipline of the whip as where the gangs are large, and directed by agents or overseers.

On the summit of a steep hill overlooking the inlet, the gentleman who is the proprietor of this ship-yard has erected a dwelling-house with cotton-works, and laid out a plantation at a very considerable expense. He has two gardens also near the water, on which the greatest labour has been bestowed. But the unfriendly nature of the climate has rendered them hitherto, I believe, a matter of curiosity and amusement to him, rather than of profit; though I saw some orange-trees, limes, and shaddocks in bearing, which promised to become of value hereafter under the vigilance and protection of

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an indefatigable superintendant. Almost all the soil of these gardens (such is the impracticable nature of this country for most agricultural purposes) was culled from adjacent spots, or the holes and interstices of rocks. But in addition to the difficulties which the land and climate present to horticulture (perhaps the most profitable mode of dealing with this rich but delicate soil), there is another very formidable obstacle to success. No sooner have the young trees attained a certain growth than they are attacked by swarms of innumerable ants, which cover and consume the leaves and blacken the barks. Various remedies have been attempted for this evil, but none seem to afford effectual relief.

We rode along on the white strand of the bays, inclining sometimes, as the road directed, into the interior of the country; we then were generally enveloped in the shades of a thick coppice of mahogany, tamarind, lignumvitæ, wild pimento, gum elemi, and

and some other forest-trees peculiar to this island. But the eye was occasionally relieved by an open scene, where the broken and rocky surface of the land had been cleared by cultivation. The mahogany (or *Madeira* as it is frequently called, from a resemblance, I was informed, to a tree of this sort produced in the island of Madeira,) has been found remarkable for its good quality; but from the hard and knotty growth of the wood, it is extremely difficult to work. The grain of that kind called the horse-flesh is the most esteemed. Mahogany constitutes one of the few articles of occasional export from this island.

Another tree which less frequently occurs, although generally the growth of the Bahamas, is the braziletto, affording a beautiful scarlet dye. These islands, for many years before they had attracted permanent settlement, were resorted to on account of this wood, which is still no less valuable and sought after; though few of the full-grown trees

trees are now seen in the woods. *The leaf of the braziletto* is small and ovated, and the twig is extremely delicate. A third tree of particular note in this forest, and remarkable for its durability and hardness, is the mastick *(Pistacia lentiscus)*. The engineer who constructed Fort Nassau at Providence, about sixty years ago, and made use of the mastick for palisadoes, describes the wood as resisting a swivel shot, and lasting a century in the ground. Other sorts of trees partaking of the same qualities, such as the lignum-vitæ, iron-wood, bullet-wood, &c. abound in this island in common with the rest of the West Indies.

In advancing east we passed through several deserted plantations, particularly a neighbourhood of planters from Grenada, who had removed, with many of their negroes, from that colony, and vested their fortunes in the deceitful speculation of planting cotton. On the east side of a spacious and beautiful bay, which designates their settlement, where the land

land swells into an elevated cape called *Mount Pisga*, we entered into another romantic cave of the same character and formation as that which I have already described. From the semblance of arched ceiling in ruins, and clusters of columns in relief on the sides, it has been called *The Abbey*. After amusing ourselves for some time in the cool and refreshing shade of this extraordinary grotto, we proceeded to a plantation on the extremity of the island and on the verge of *Achlin's Key*.

CHAPTER XI.

Acklin's Island.—Description of the country.—A cotton plantation.—Mr. Eve's new gin.—Birds on Acklin's Island.—The flamingo.—Temperature of the climate.—Departure from Acklin's.

THE first European navigators, who surveying this coast looked in over a dangerous reef, impassable for the most part even to boats, and forming their conjecture from the appearance of the distant land, represented it as one connected island; as which till within these few years it has been described: but although a succession of banks projected from Acklin's, where the land is much broken into islets, almost unites it with Crooked Island, they are separated by a channel perfectly distinct, but fordable in the narrowest part. It is scarcely eight years since the gentleman to whom I was indebted

debted for my visit to this island, who had served for some years as an officer in the army during the American war, first set his foot on Acklin's Key, which was then an entire and unsurveyed wilderness. The hardships he encountered during some solitary years on his first settlement, from occasional sickness and the want of those assistances which an inhabited neighbourhood affords, can be surmounted only by a spirit ardent in the pursuit of an object and firm to its purpose. His dwelling-house and works were situated near an inlet on the shore, commanding an agreeable view of the green straits which separated the islands, in some parts above a league across. Considering the rough and difficult track we had hitherto followed, and calculating the extent of his improvements from the time bestowed upon them, I was not a little surprised on landing at *Acklin's Key* to find a carriage in waiting to convey us to his house, about a mile from the ferry, to which a road, of his own

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making, conducted us at our ease. Before entering his grounds we passed through a shrubbery, which seemed to announce a stronger power of vegetation in the soil than that which we had just left. It was composed of many ornamental and useful trees, amongst which I noticed sapadillas in bearing, the *Cascarella* (*Croton Eleutheria* of Swartz) exhibiting its delicate bark and leaf with a light reverse, and a beautiful species of the *Mimosa*, remarkable for its small globular leaves and pods of a ruddy brown, which lined each side of the road. I was very much pleased with the neatness of the approach to the house, which afforded an admirable proof of the owner's superior industry, and attention to those exterior comforts, which constitute half the enjoyment of civilized life. The road winding up the hill from the inlet was a wide and level grass-plat with orange-trees planted on each side, some of which had attained a perfect growth; but unluckily the greater part had become victims

tims to an insuperable malignity in the climate. In front of his house this indefatigable gentleman had cleared a large piece of ground intended for his lawn, surrounded by a margin or fringe of woods, which separated it from the adjacent fields (a judicious mode of plantership adopted lately to protect the cotton shrubs from the cold winds); and near the centre of the expanse of cleared ground was a cool excavation in the rocks, overhung by two or three branching wild fig-trees. These cavities on the rocky surface of the land often occur in this part of Acklin's Key, and sometimes of such a depth that it has been found extremely difficult and painful to extricate horses which, browsing in the woods and pastures, have accidentally fallen in. Here and there I observed patches of soil of a promising aspect, but totally barren, similar to what they call "yellow spots" in the Charibbean Islands: in some places it appeared to consist entirely of the dust of the decayed *Cactus peruvianus*.

The

The cotton-fields at this time were in full blow; the white down, or wool, which envelops the seeds, just beginning to appear. This is the moment at which it is necessary to gather in the pods before their contents become dishevelled and scattered by the wind. Various species and varieties of the cotton shrub, imported from Georgia (whence the planters in the Bahamas generally emigrated) and the eastern and more southern parts of the West Indies, are cultivated promiscuously here; but that which has been brought from *Anguilla* seems more generally, I believe, in use, and is raised with the least labour. It is generally supposed, by good planters, that about five or six acres of land may be employed in the culture of the Anguilla cotton to each working slave or taskable hand: but in the Georgian (or as it is properly called Persian) cotton, not more than four. This estimate of the quantity of labour which the plantation requires, comprehends that part of it in provisions and pasture, or appropriated

priated to the margins of the fields, which may be about one half of the whole. I amused myself in passing over the shrubberies at the time of gathering in the crop, which was performed with much more dexterity by the women than the men, although their utmost exertions were stimulated and put forth by the hope of a reward. One lusty female slave, with a child upon her back, gathered in between forty and fifty pounds for each day's work. The greatest quantity of cotton is usually found on bushes in the more elevated and exposed situations; and it has been said, that in some estates half, and even three-fourths, of a ton of clean wool has been produced to every working slave. This, however, would be to calculate on very rare fortune. Most planters would feel themselves at present well satisfied with one-sixth of the greater quantity. In Jamaica, Mr. Edwards considers a hundred and twelve pounds to each acre a just allowance.

At

At the time of gathering in the crop (in the month of March) I observed many of the bushes yet in blossom, and an after-crop was expected in the summer ensuing: but it is usually accounted rather deceitful and precarious.

When the pods have been collected from the fields and deposited in the store-rooms, it is then necessary to extract the seeds, and clean the wool previous to its being shipped for England. A simple instrument, composed of two parallel rollers, turned in opposite directions, which suffer the staple to pass but exclude the seeds, has been heretofore generally used for this purpose throughout the West Indies: but an ingenious gentleman of Providence (Mr. Joseph Eve) has greatly improved upon the mechanism of this common cotton gin, and enlarged its dimensions; an invention for which he has been rewarded by the Legislature of the Islands. As there are very few situations in the Bahamas

in

in which the power of water can be applied, they are constructed with vanes to be turned by the wind.

The animals which frequent the woods and shores of Acklin's Key appear in much greater numbers; and I found them more tame than the same species in South Crooked Island, which has been longer inhabited. In the fields and neighbourhood of the plantations are seen many of the bald-headed pigeons of Jamaica and Carolina, described by Catesby, and of the small green parrot: the flesh of the latter animal, of a dark brown, is by no means so tender or agreeable to the taste as that of the wild pigeon; although they are both generally sought after for the table. But the bird more remarkable for its size and brilliancy of colour than any perhaps in the western world, and which is seen now principally on the most retired shores and swamps of these islands, is the *Flamingo*. For several successive mornings I observed an extended flock of Flamingos, from

from an eminence, feeding with their heads under water in the shoal part of a distant bay; but so great was their watchfulness and timidity, that it was impossible to approach them. Their colour at a remote view appears of a lively pink. The young birds, when taken, are found to be nearly white; and the feathers on the pinions and on the necks of the old ones are of a deep scarlet. The quill feathers of some of the birds I found tipt with black. As I saw them at a considerable distance, their glowing plumage contrasted with the green surface of the water was extremely beautiful. The naturalists describe this bird, called *Phœnicopteros* (a species of crane), as remarkable for its gentleness and mansuetude. Columbus and his followers observed a great number of what they called *tall red birds* perfectly tame in all the Indian villages on the south side of Cuba, similar to those which the early voyagers found domesticated amongst the negroes on the coast of Africa.

They were often seen (according to some of the old inhabitants) in the Windward Islands: but as those parts have become more frequented, their native shyness has driven them to the tranquil and solitary shores of the Bahamas; though in the more cultivated islands even here they begin to disappear. Towards dusk they generally paid a visit to a morass in the interior of Acklin's Island, in the neighbourhood of which it was supposed they roosted. I succeeded, after much trouble, in procuring one or two of them to be taken alive. When young they have been often reared by the inhabitants, for their nature is extraordinarily tractable and mild. The flesh of this bird is extremely rich, much like that of the wild duck, but with a strong fishy taste. The tongue is certainly delicate; but I did not find it worthy of the high encomiums bestowed on it by the antients; by whom a dish of flamingos' tongues was esteemed one of

of the greatest delicacies in their luxurious feasts.

On the key in the inlet, opposite to the house of the gentleman whom I visited, he had placed a number of guanas to breed. Alligators were sometimes brought in for the table; but it required considerable address and some courage to destroy them. The negoes, however, never display so much ingenuity or patience as in pursuit of prey. The flesh of an alligator which I tasted was hard, white, and very much resembled the sturgeon's.

Towards the middle of March, after a succession of strong gales from the north and north-east, during which we heard of several wrecks in our neighbourhood, the weather became more genial; and from the notes of the mocking-birds, and an appearance of quicker vegetation in the trees, which are never totally stript of their leaves in the winter of this climate, the influence of spring was now evident.

In

In February and March I found the thermometer ranged between seventy and eighty. From a register, very accurately kept in Crooked Island for several years, it appeared that the greatest heat in summer has seldom exceeded ninety on Fahrenheit's scale, and the greatest depression in winter has rarely been below fifty. The medium temperature of the summer at the hottest part of the day may be about eighty-six, in winter seventy-two or rather more.

An opportunity now offering to the westward, on the 16th of March I quitted Acklin's Key, and on the eighteenth arrived at the site of Pitt's Town. A small sloop of thirty tons burthen, built on this island, was ready to sail. This vessel had been employed as a *drogher* in collecting cotton from the different plantations in the two islands for a large merchant-ship which had just completed her loading, and lay in the bay, or Portland Harbour, with two or three small

vessels, giving this nascent town an appearance of some trade. I embarked with a strong wind at south-east, and before sunset we could distinguish the end of *Long Island*, which lies nearly west from the Bird Rock: midway the land was visible from the mast-head on both sides of the channel.

CHAPTER XII.

The Author leaves Crooked Island, and passes by Long Island and Exuma; of which islands, as also of Rum Key and Watling Island, a short account is given.

LONG ISLAND, as far as I could judge from a distinct view of it in passing along the northern coast, bears a very strong resemblance to that which I had just left. It was our original intention to have kept on the south side, which is more broken into keys, and affords, I believe, some convenient harbours; but the wind inclining to the south, we apprehended a shift to the westward, and, what is termed by the sailors in this climate, a round-about, which might have greatly embarrassed us in the shoal water of the Bahama Bank, and upon a lee-shore. This island is so named from the great length of its figure, near 100 miles,

miles, compared with its breadth, which at a mean scarely can exceed three miles. It was called *Yuma* by the Indians; of the import of which name in their language I can form no conjecture: but two islands, the one *Exuma*, lying on the west, and the other Atwood's Keys, or *Sumana*, on the east, are probably derivatives from it: also some islets lying south-east on the margin of the Great Bahama Bank are called by the name of the *Yumettas*.

As Long Island was settled at an earlier period than Crooked Island, the improvements on the former have been more advanced, but the soil at the same time is probably more exhausted. At a very early period Long Island was resorted to by vessels from the Bermudas and New York for salt*. Before the American war some inconsiderable plantations had been made; and a few years after the peace of 1783 it was

* Appendix to the Lives of the Pirates.

computed

computed that near four thousand acres of land were in cultivation, and about eight hundred slaves employed on them. Of the present state of its population, from the desertions which have lately taken place, it would be a difficult and unpleasing office to form an exact estimate. Amongst its natural productions, this island is remarkable for the number and luxuriance, it is said, of its mountain cabbage-trees. It has been found, I believe, as productive in the culture of cotton as any part of the Bahamas: but a considerable quantity of the land in every plantation has remained uncleared from its natural sterility; and that which has been under cultivation is now for the most part likely to be abandoned. Three years ago it was positively asserted that eight or ten plantations were entirely quitted, and thirteen others partially given up, on *Long Island*. Yet this does not absolutely imply a total loss of property; for the soil, after a few years being left to nature, will recover itself, if not burnt

in the previous clearing, or injudiciously exhausted. It is thought, however, that one-half of the cotton land would not be fit for renewed tillage by any mode of treatment in less than twenty years to come. Upon the question being put to a very intelligent gentleman*, who was for some years a planter on this island, whether the worn-out lands could not be restored to their original fertility by manure? he answered, "Without doubt, manure will have the same effect on our lands as on those of other countries. Did this require proof, our gardens would afford it; but it is impossible for our planters to manure to any extent at present, owing to the want of cattle. These islands, however, are heaps of lime-stones and shells, covered (more or less) with a very rich vegetable mould; and the two former of these substances may easily be made to produce a

* Wm. Wylly, Esq. Attorney-General of the Bahamas.

sufficiency

sufficiency of the latter; for I have seen no other country in which the progress of vegetation is more rapid than in these islands, and that even in situations where it is hardly possible to discover any thing like soil. In woods which are so dense as to be scarce penetrable (which is generally the case with us), vegetable mould cannot fail to accumulate very fast; and a mixture of that with calcareous substances must necessarily form a fertile soil, extremely well adapted to the production of cotton."——

A good carriage road runs nearly one hundred miles along the south-eastern coast of the island, and on the margin of the plantations. The ridge of hills sloping towards the sea appeared to follow the inclination of its length; and the plantations are laid out, I was informed, with the division lines generally traversing the island in its breadth: from north-east to south-west. There are two large salt-ponds also here, from whence the inhabitants are employed in

raking salt. After passing the north-western extremity of *Long Island* we altered our course, steering more to the west, with a view to observe the land of Great Stocking Island, which extends along the north-east side of Exuma, and forms its principal harbour.

The Exumas.—My notice of Great and Little Exuma, which, to my disappointment, we passed unseen, must be very summary. From all that I could learn, they bear the strongest affinity to the foregoing in almost every circumstance to which my attention in describing them has been confined. Their soil is fertile, but the same fatality attends the cultivation of cotton as in the rest of the Bahamas. The number of slaves, according to an enumeration of them in 1788, was found, I believe, nearly equal to that of the slaves on Long Island. A port of entry is established at the principal harbour, which, though one of the best in the Bahamas, is not accessible to ships of any considerable draught of water.

Rum

Rum Key and Watlings.—To the north-east of Exuma, two islands will be observed on the map which are now, or have lately been, in cultivation, named *Rum Key* and *Watlings Island*. *Rum Key*, sometimes named *Triangulo*, I hear, is almost entirely deserted, one settlement alone remaining there at present*. *Watlings*, having been more recently brought into cultivation, attracts some attention; and, though of little consequence from its size, is perhaps one of the most thriving spots in the Bahamas.

* A very estimable and intelligent gentleman, Mr. John Kelsall of Exuma, mentioned that he had lately removed his slaves to this island from Little Exuma.

CHAPTER XIII.

St. Salvador.—Landing of Columbus.—Present state of the island.—The Author proceeds by the Keys (on one of which he lands), and over the Great Bahama Bank, to New Providence.

STEERING about ten or eleven leagues in a northern direction from Long Island, you fall in with the south-east end of St. Salvador, memorable, according to the allusion of its name, for the preservation of Columbus. On the 11th of October, in the year 1492, that illustrious navigator first struck soundings to the westward of this island, and, laying-to in the night, observed a light on shore at the distance of two leagues. The next morning he landed in his boat somewhere on the eastern or the southern coast, and rowed on the ensuing day to a harbour, supposed to be the same as that which at present bears the name of *Port Howe*. Although within a few leagues of St. Salvador,

vador, I could not discover the land at the south-east point, which is low, and surrounded by a reef of rocks. The Spanish historiographer Herrera, upon the authority of all the narratives of this voyage (which are not always perfectly accurate), describes the harbour which Columbus first entered, as large, spacious, and, from the circumstance of its being on a crook of land almost encompassed by the sea, susceptible of an easy defence. A small Indian village, consisting of six houses, then stood near the landing-place, surrounded with trees, exhibiting the appearance of gardens. A country-house belonging to *Mr. Lyford*, and called *Columbia* in honour of the great navigator, is now situated near this supposed spot.

If we consider the position of two adjacent islands (Watlings and Little Island), and the undeviating western course pursued by Columbus, (for Dr. Robertson observes, that in the whole extent of his voyage he scarcely advanced four degrees to the southward of his

his point of departure,) it would seem probable that he must have passed within sight of one or other of those islands, unless he had landed further northward on the eastern coast of St. Salvador than is generally supposed. The circumstance may perhaps be explained by making a great allowance for the strength and setting of the current; and its irregularity will warrant almost any supposition: yet one cannot but admire the fortune and skill of this accomplished admiral in effecting a passage, at present never heard of, through this part of the Bahamas to Cuba; for probably nine out of ten strange vessels attempting it without the assistance of some chart, even in our present improved state of navigation, would be wrecked; and although it might be said the natives afterwards piloted the Spanish ships, they were unused to the draft of water of any thing bigger than a canoe.

The Indian name of this island was *Guanahani*; and though changed by Columbus

to

to St. Salvador, so little respect was paid to his memory, that till very lately it has been commonly called *Cat Island*—it is supposed, from the number of domestic cats which left on shore have multiplied prodigiously on this and most of the Bahamas.

From the ruins of a chapel and some few other buildings which are yet seen, it is evident that the Spaniards, although they afterwards abandoned the island, effected some slight settlement after its discovery. For many years afterwards it continued without inhabitants; and no settlement of any note was ever effected on it till the emigration of the loyalists from America after the cession of Florida in 1783. Amongst others, the family of a distinguished officer (Lieutenant-colonel Devaux), whose achievement I shall have occasion to notice in a short historical account of the colony, became settled on this island. St. Salvador, in 1788, contained forty heads of families, sixteen planters, and 458 slaves—at which time 2000 acres of

were found to be in cultivation. The soil is esteemed good: but the crops of cotton suddenly failed a few years ago; which would have occasioned the total desertion of the island, if a seasonable relief had not been afforded by the introduction of a new species of the plant from Georgia.

After passing the tropic near the islands of Great and Little Exuma, which lie stretched to leeward, or on the south-west side of Long Island and Stocking Island, from which, as from each other, they are separated only by guts or narrow channels, we stood in towards the Exuma Keys with an intention of getting upon the white water of the Bank, as it is descriptively styled by the sailors. That immense accumulation of sand, called the Great Bahama Bank, offers a matter of curious speculation to the geological observer. Like the shores of the Bahama Islands in general, I believe it consists in a great measure of the relics of sea shells in the form of sand, more or less worn and rounded

rounded by the action of water. The Bank, which occupies an expanse of some hundred leagues in circumference, is bounded southerly and westerly by Cuba, and on the north-east by a broken range of innumerable little islands called the Keys, which immediately separate it from the unfathomable sea of Exuma Sound. The water on the Bank in this quarter was supposed to be from fourteen to eighteen feet deep. It did not appear from any thing I could learn, that the soundings have either increased or diminished for many years past. At a certain depth, probably, the sand is underlaid by calcareous rocks, from the heads or fragments of it which in many places, on approaching the islands, appear at the bottom; and which, as you coast the Keys, require the expertness of a vigilant pilot to prevent the vessel in a tossing sea from striking herself against their protruded heads in the shoals, which often occur. But the light colour of the sand and the transparency of the water render the

passage

passage neither difficult nor dangerous, with a proper degree of attention.

Through the Keys there are several cuts or passages from Exuma Sound to the Bank; and as we found a considerable swell in the deep water, and continual lightnings in the north-east gave us reason to apprehend an equinoctial gale, we were anxious to get upon the Bank under the lee of the Keys, with the expectation of a more smooth and secure navigation. With this view, in the afternoon of the day after passing Exuma, we steered towards a passage named *Conch Cut*, from a prodigious quantity of conch shells which have been rolled from the Bank or adjoining shores, and thrown together near the mouth of this narrow pass. On making up to it with a fair wind, such a powerful tide set out from the Bank that we were compelled to abandon the passage for the present. Continuing therefore our former course, we passed an endless succession of small islands, stretching nearly in a north-western and south-

south-eastern line. They were covered with small trees or shrubs, and on one or two of them we discovered some traces of inhabitants. After running about a hundred miles in the same parallel, the chain of islands assumes a different inclination, forming what is termed their *elbow*, at a settlement begun by *Colonel Deveaux* after his brilliant achievement in this quarter of the world (to which I have just before alluded) towards the conclusion of the American war. In tacking out on the Bank in a short and fretful sea, a number of the dark heads of rocks were visible at times in the white sandy bottom, and we were obliged to avoid them by a sinuous course. Our captain, an expert and intelligent *Conch*, could judge with admirable precision within a few inches of the depth that his vessels would reach at every plunge: but being engaged a few minutes in examining the bearings of the distant land, and trusting in the mean time to the

the observation of a negro, we passed inadvertently over the tail of one of the rocks; and, if the helm had not been shifted, by a passenger's direction, in the twinkling of an eye, with the next wave our bottom must have felt a severer shock than any other timber than the mahogany of Crooked Island could have well resisted. From the apparent indifference of most of the crew at this crisis, I should presume that they trust to their expertness in swimming on such occasions, like the aborigines: yet, although very near the bottom, we were at the distance of some miles from the Keys, and I confess I should have been somewhat at a loss to have found my way there without the assistance of a vessel.

The weather proving unfavourable after we had effected the passage, we came-to and lay in a small harbour, which sheltered us from the wind, and afforded me an opportunity of examining the shore.

One

One of the islands on which I landed, and which seemed to bear a characteristic resemblance in its appearance to all the rest, was composed of calcareous rock, much worn by the action of the sea, and fretted into holes like honey-combs. It was covered with silver-leaved palmettos, a dwarfish sort of mountain cabbage, wild fig-trees, sapadillas, and many of the vegetable productions which I observed at Crooked Island, but with very little soil to invite cultivation. The animals I particularly noticed were the *mocking birds*, which enliven the solitary shores with their own unborrowed and delightful melodies. From the holes and interstices of the rocks I frequently started lizards, which often in complexion seem to partake of the colour of the stone amongst which they lurk; and their full grown brethren the guanas, being unmolested in these desert islands, appeared in great abundance; but so watchful and evasive that I found it extremely difficult to shoot

shoot them. The bay was replete with various kinds of fish, which were easily taken; some of them remarkable for the lustre and variety of their colour; such as the grunt with azure and golden streaks on its nose, and the hynde spotted with brilliant red, and various* others, correctly represented in the drawings of Catesby.

Approaching towards the continent of North America, we now for the first time experienced a north-west wind, which induced us to continue at anchor, till, the north-east trade recurring, we got under weigh, and soon ran out of sight of the islands, proceeding over the Bank towards New Providence. The reflection from the white sand of the Great Bank rendered the sky almost of a

*Of the fish common to the Windward Islands the following are found here: sword fish, king fish, jew fish, hog fish, angel fish, bill fish, hound fish, parrot fish, trumpet fish, gar fish, bream, ten pounder, and some others.

livid

livid colour. It was a novel situation, to behold an expanse of sea unbounded by any land, and the bottom at the same time distinctly visible at the depth of a few feet. Although the day was cloudless and the atmosphere uncommonly pure, the azure of the horizontal sky seemed flushed with an infusion of pink colour, producing an effect as beautiful as it was singular. We now drew near to New Providence.

The tops of the trees on *Rose Island**, lying to the north-east of it, which were first visible as we approached the land, had exactly the appearance of a wood elevated in the air; an optical phænomenon which, though common in the northern latitudes, particularly in the autumn, I had never before observed in the West Indies.

It was a reviving change, after having been

* On Rose Island I observed two or three houses and some improvements: but it was principally spoken of on account of its salt-pond.

so long in the solitude and silence of the out-islands, either totally or partially uninhabited, to observe the numerous sails that appeared in every quarter steering to one point, while we heard at a distance the hum and activity of a populous town.

CHAPTER XIV.

Description of the harbour and town of Nassau —its Trade.—Government of the Bahama Islands.—Judicial establishment.—Agricultural Society of the Bahamas.—Causes of the failure of cotton.—General description of the country.

New Providence.—THE harbour of New Providence, to which the early settlement and present consequence of this island may be attributed, is formed, like that of Exuma, by a long key or slip of land running in front of the town of Nassau, nearly parallel with its length, from east-south-east to west-north-west. In entering through the eastern channel I passed by a small key, which formed

a boundary on that side, whilst two or three corresponding islands appeared in the opposite quarter between the extremity of Hog Island (or the principal key) and the shore of Providence, rendering the enclosed position, if not completely land-locked, yet inaccessible in every direction to the unbroken violence of the sea. The body of the town is on the southern side of the harbour, and extends on a pretty steep acclivity to the summit of a ridge, which runs, as I observed of the other islands, for the most part in the direction of the general line of coast.

The view of the town, comprehending on the west a large fortress (on the same eminence), and the barracks for the troops overlooking the sea, is extremely striking from the mouth of the harbour. The general aspect of the place has something in it fresh and lively. The streets are regularly disposed, and in some parts remarkable for their unparallelled smoothness, being nothing more than

than the solid surface of a stone quarry, which has afforded of *late* abundant materials for building on the spot: I say of late, for singular as it may appear, when spoken of a town as well built as any I saw in the West Indies, and which promises to become distinguished for its beauty, the durable buildings in Nassau were originally composed of stone imported from the Bermudas, at the distance of more than two hundred leagues. But the rock of the native quarries has been discovered to answer effectually every purpose of masonry, by a wash of lime, which gives both consistency and beauty to the exterior. A considerable square, or quadrangle, susceptible of much future embellishment, now occupies a large space in the western division of the town. The north side of this open space, near the water, is bounded by palisadoes, enclosing the works of a neglected fortress, from whence the town is named, constructed about the year 1740 by an engineer of the name of Bruce.

Bruce. The present residence of the Governor of the Bahamas is at some distance from this square, and towards the upper end of one of the streets, has a pleasing command of view, which includes the lower part of the town, Hog Island, the harbour intervening, and the more distant sea.

The ample materials furnished by nature, and the taste as well as circumstances of the inhabitants, ameliorated by the late war, have disposed them to the extension of their public buildings. The court-house now erecting, a new jail, and work-house in its vicinity, and the eastern parish church*, for which more than five thousand pounds was voted during one session by the Legislature, are instances of simultaneous and liberal expense by a small community in the improve-

* This building, erected by Mr. Joseph Eve (who informed me that he had made the roof low to avoid hurricanes), has a modern air; but it is not yet apparently finished.

ment

ment of its metropolis, which, if persisted in, must soon render it highly attractive and ornamental. Indeed one would suppose Nassau at present a very agreeable winter's residence for the valetudinarians of the southern part of the West Indies, particularly of the Windward Islands, from which the voyage is short and easy. It affords a medium temperature of climate between the heat of those islands and the keen air of North America, and the greater part of the year is extremely healthy.

The governor's dwelling is provided for him at the expense of the colonial government, which pays a rent of three hundred and twenty pounds per annum for his present house. But it is proposed to erect a new one on a more elegant and improved plan, for which the sum of ten thousand pounds has been already voted by the Assembly. The opulence of this small island is derived from other sources than the soil; for I believe it can scarcely boast of a single cotton plantation,

tation, and remains in a great measure clothed in its native wood. Many of the principal planters, however, on the other islands, who are concerned in the administration of the government, or in trade, have fixed their residence at Nassau. It is also the principal military and naval station in the Bahamas. But on subjects at all connected with its defence, or the means it may possess of annoying the enemy at a period of hostilities, I shall forbear to speak.

The town of Nassau is divided into two parishes, each of which is provided with a church and rector liberally supported by public contribution, or the eleemosynary bounty of the English society for propagating the gospel*.

The principal trade carried on at present is with England, the Southern Islands in the

* But those who fill the clerical offices in the West Indies are not all exact likenesses of Cowper's portrait of the preacher whom "Paul, were he himself on earth, would most approve."

West

West Indies, and the United States of America, from whence the island derives continual supplies of live stock and provisions. Like most other parts of the prosperous empire of which it constitutes a part, Nassau has had reason of late years to boast of an increasing commerce, in proof of which it is said* that while the exports in 1773 and 1774 amounted only to 5216*l.* 8*s.* 10*d.* and the imports during the same period to 3592*l.*; in 1786 and 1787 the former wereaugmented to 58,707*l.* 10*s.* 1*d.* sterling (exclusive of a great deal of bullion, of which no account was kept), and the latter to 136,359*l.* 14*s.* 11*d.*: during the succeeding years of war,

* I refer to an intelligent pamphlet, known at Nassau by name of the "*Blue Book*," published by the present Attorney-General (Mr. W. Wylley) when advocating the claims of the planters removed from North America, to an extension in their favour of the representation in the colonial Legislature. It contains an able survey of the comparative state of the colony before and after the American war.

without any diminution of their increasing prosperity, the attention of the inhabitants of Nassau has been diverted from a regular trade. It appeared to be visited often whilst I remained there by African slave-ships, some of which disposed of their cargoes on the island, but the major proceeded to the Havannah.

I was witness to the sale of a pretty numerous cargo, which was conducted with more decorum, with respect to the slaves, than I had expected. They were distributed mostly in lots from five to twenty in each; but some of the boys and girls were disposed of separately. On the neck of each slave was slung a label specifying the price which the owner demanded, and varying between two and three hundred dollars, according to age, strength, sex, &c. This cargo was composed, as generally happens, of slaves from different nations, and speaking languages unintelligible to each other. Some apprehensions prevailed, notwithstanding all the expedients which had

had been used to convince them to the contrary, that they were brought over to be fatted and *eaten.* I had an opportunity of observing two or three the day after the sale in the hands of benevolent masters purchased for domestic servants, who seemed much delighted with their kind treatment as well as change of situation. Instead of being naked, they were clothed (in this climate as usual) in woollens; their food was much superior to what they had ever known before; they found themselves lodged in habitations abounding in comforts, some of them indeed superior to their comprehension; and in in the streets they beheld many of their own colour, whose appearance, friendship, and hilarity had the most powerful influence in rendering them contented and happy in their new scene of life. I shall not presume to touch upon a subject of so much gravity and importance as the slave-trade, which has engaged all the eloquence and almost exhausted the attention of parliament: but whilst I applaud the philanthropy which still advocates

the abolition of this traffic, I must remark that I have found the opinion of many liberal and enlightened strangers in the West Indies undergo some relaxation on becoming acquainted with the actual situation and character of the negroes. Whether most of the persons of this description with whom I conversed felt the bias of some personal interest, or the contagion of an opposite opinion by associating with the proprietors of slaves, or whether on a familiar view of what is vicious it becomes less obnoxious to our feelings, I cannot pronounce. But with respect to myself, I must frankly confess that at times I found an inclination to pardon something of the supposed criminality of transporting them from Africa, on comparing their destitute and wretched state when first imported with their condition under the treatment of good masters. Still it was at a moment when I forgot the unfeeling and often capricious cruelties exercised by superintendants and people of colour (their worst domestic tyrants), instances of which cannot be controverted

troverted or ever excused by those who have seen them and felt "*les angoisses que fait éprouver à une ame fiere et sensible le spectacle d'une injustice**." Yet, whatever may be the horror we justly feel at the idea of their perpetual bondage, it will be recollected that they are not often endowed with that spirit of independence and dignity of sentiment which render it insupportable to a generous mind. On this principle *Las Casas* felt justified, it is said, in relieving the slavery of the high-spirited Indian nations by promoting the introduction of negroes. The cause of humanity, however, has been very little indebted to him by this expedient: for the Indians in the islands have nearly perished, and the negroes continue slaves.

The constitution of the Bahamas, upon the model of all our colonial governments in the West Indies, preserves in the distribution of the legislative, executive, and judicial

* Condorcet.

powers,

powers, an exact resemblance to the system of the parent country.

The Governor, as representative of the King, exercises the principal executive authority. He is commander in chief of the militia, institutes and determines the sessions of the legislature, and possesses a negative on their proceedings subject to the approbation of the crown. His annual income, at this time, is estimated at something less than 3000*l.* sterling, including with a home salary the colonial perquisites derived principally, I believe, from licensing vessels, and a small proportion of the wrecked property. In his judicial character he presides in the court of chancery, and the court of errors or appeals from the principal common-law tribunal*.

The council, which consists of twelve members appointed by the crown, and in

* He is vested also with the judicial power of the ordinary.

case

case of vacancy during the Governor's administration usually filled up at his recommendation, constitutes the upper house of the legislature, and participates with him in the judicial powers of the chancery and court of errors.

The house of assembly at present consists of twenty-six members, returned by the several islands in this government comprehended in districts. In the last sessions the town of Nassau and the eastern and western districts of New Providence were represented by eight members, Harbour Island by three, Eleuthera three, Abaco three, St. Salvador one, Long Island two, Exuma three, Andros two, and Crooked Island by one. The qualification of a representative, generally speaking, is either property of the value of 2000*l.* currency, or specifically 200 acres of cultivated land. In the choice, every free male white inhabitant, twenty-one years of age, resident twelve months within the government, and having been six months previously

a house-

a householder or a freeholder, or having paid duties to the amount of 50*l.* in the preceding year, is entitled to a vote.

The judicial branch of the government is composed, in addition to the courts before mentioned, of a general (or supreme) court for the province, exercising the consolidated powers of the courts of common-law in Westminster-Hall, and holding its sessions in terms of three weeks, at stated periods, beginning in the months of January, April, and July. The practice of this court is modeled upon that of the king's bench. The Chief Justice receives a salary of 500*l.* sterling from the crown; and, besides his perquisites of office, computed annually at about 400*l.* sterling, a colonial compensation for his services, of 500*l.* currency per annum. The two puisne judges receive a home salary of 200*l.* sterling, and usually 250*l.* currency from the colonial government.

An inferior court of common pleas, taking cognizance of all causes where the subject in dispute

dispute does not exceed the sum of 20*l.*, is held every three months at Nassau, from whence an appeal lies to the general court. If the matter in controversy exceeds 300*l.* in the superior court, it may be revised by the court of errors; and if beyond 500*l.*, an appeal may be made in the last resort to the King in council. There is also a court of vice-admiralty at Nassau. The business, however, at the time of my visit to New Providence was so confined, that the functions of the judges presiding in these several courts (except the chancery and court of errors) were in fact performed singly by Mr. P. Edwards, an amiable and very estimable gentleman of the profession. Happy indeed were that country which could boast of a total exemption from juridical strife! This, however, would argue a degree of perfection to which our nature and social institutions have made but slight advances. The attorney-general of the Bahamas receives from the crown and colonial government about

500*l.* sterling per annum. But no provision is made for the solicitor-general.

The rate of interest for money in this colony has been lately fixed at 6 per cent. The damages allowed on protested bills of exchange returned from Europe are 20 per cent., and from America 15.

An agricultural society has been recently established under the patronage of the legislature of the Bahamas; an institution from whence the most beneficial consequences might be expected to ensue. Among its proceedings already published is a communication from Dr. Anderson of St. Vincent's, describing a number of West Indian plants transmitted from the botanic garden under his superintendance in that island. Several kinds of the bread-fruit tree, which succeeds as well as most exotics in this climate, are particularly recommended to the attention of the society. But a subject properly falling under its notice, of greater public interest, the causes of the late failure of cotton, has

 been

been taken up and fully investigated by the government itself. Questions have been proposed by the house of assembly to the most intelligent and experienced planters* in the different islands; and from their unanimous opinion it appears, that no reasonable expectation can be entertained of any success, at least for some years, in the cultivation of cotton. Amongst the causes assigned for this severe and general disappointment, one of the most prominent is the destruction committed by those baneful insects the red bug and chenille, which I before noticed. Injudicious planting, and clearing the land, either by burning the soil, exposing it too much to the rigour of cold winds, or exhausting it by unremitted tillage, have been considered as fatal as the destructive agency of the insects. How these obstacles may be

* Messrs Kelsall, Hall, W. Wylley, Eve, Anderson, T. B. M'Kinnen, J. Moss, and nine other gentlemen.

in part or totally removed, is a topic which affords some conjecture and speculation: but it seems by all the gentlemen to be considered as a work only of time, which admits scarcely any prospect of relief from intermediate ruin or distress.

The greater part of the island of New Providence, as I have before observed, yet remains uncultivated. The exceptions to this general description, to be found in the environs of the town and along the margin of the northern coast, consist principally of gardens, pasture grounds, pineries and orange groves. Situated near the line of the tropic, Providence can boast of a climate admitting the cultivation in the natural ground of the vegetables of both zones, though perhaps not favourable to the peculiar productions of either. In the town of Nassau and in its neighbourhood, I saw two gardens formed and kept up with great labour and expense. In that which I visited, west of the town, strawberries

berries and many of the northern fruits were associated with some of the most delicate inmates of the English hot-house.

The roads leading some miles along the shore on each side of the town are extremely good. In the eastern direction the landscape is picturesque, and embellished with rural improvements and some country-houses, particularly a small seat called the Hermitage, formed with no inconsiderable labour by the late Governor, Lord Dunmore. In the opposite quarter, at a small distance from the town, I visited an extensive pinery. The plants were irregularly scattered amongst the rocks (which every where appear on the surface), and seemed to be in a thriving condition, although very little attention was bestowed on them—at least little attention proportioned to our ideas of their value: but the apples, I was informed, are sold at Nassau sometimes as low as a dollar the hundred. Whilst walking through the pinery, and admiring a profusion of this rich and beautiful

beautiful fruit, I was surprised to find myself insensibly led among the stems of a grove of pitch pine trees, and to observe from a singular coincidence of circumstances apples lying promiscuously together, which bear the same name, though as remote in their nature as the positions of the countries to which they respectively appertain. This is the most southern situation in which I have observed the pitch pine* a native of the North-American forest; and I felt highly gratified at meeting unexpectedly an old acquaintance, which informed me that I was on the confines of a climate more congenial with my nature.

From my observations of the thermometer at Nassau (although the spring was advancing) there was a difference of two or three degrees in the temperature of this climate in

* A species of pine which perhaps resembles this is found on the mountains of Cuba. See the splendid and truly magnificent work on pine trees lately published by the Vice-president of the Linnean Society.

favour

favour of its coolness, compared with that of Crooked Island; and the northerly winds were more fresh and invigorating. I have incidentally suggested that Nassau is at times visited by *hurricanes*. Whether, strictly speaking, that term may be properly applied or not to certain gales of wind in this quarter, during the hurricane months in the West Indies very destructive tempests have been sometimes experienced in the Bahamas. Two or three years ago, in the harbour of Nassau, protected as I have described, I believe one hundred vessels were driven on shore. The wind commenced at north-east, and shifted to the opposite point of the compass, from whence it blew with increased fury.

On descending the hill in a southerly direction from Nassau, the country appears totally uncultivated; and from the summit of a ridge running parallel with that on which the town extends, at about two miles distance from Nassau, the southern boundaries of the island

island are nearly visible. The general figure of New Providence is that of a parallelogram with acute angles projecting east and west. The diagonal is about twenty-seven miles in length. In 1801 Nassau contained 1599 white inhabitants, 752 free people of colour, and 3861 slaves.

With respect to the inhabitants, generally speaking, I can have very little to say. The minute shades of difference, which characterize the English settlers in the different latitudes on this side of the Atlantic, are scarcely perceptible, or worthy of description. Local causes have not as yet had a sufficient influence on their nature, customs, or manners, to produce any very striking peculiarities.

But were I on a slight impression to judge, from the present and former characters of the natives I should be almost tempted to attribute something to an assimilating influence in the climate; for I certainly did in some striking instances observe that amiable

able and beneficent disposition which accords with the representation of the antient *Lucayans*. Their regularity of features also is not imperceptible in some modern faces. Perhaps there are few countries more favourable to female beauty than this and the adjacent parts of the continent. I have nowhere observed more delicacy united with a spirited expression of countenance.

CHAPTER XV.

Historical account of New Providence.—Black Beard the pirate.—Governor Woodes Rogers.—Colonel De Veaux's conquest of the island from the Spaniards in 1783.

THE early part of the history of this colony consists in a great measure of the desultory transactions of a daring body of pirates, who fixed on the harbour of Nassau as the rendezvous of their shipping and the depôt of their spoil. The shoal water on the banks, and the numerous keys inaccessible to large ships, and difficult of approach to all, afforded them for many years, in prosecuting their depredations in the West Indies and remoter seas, a secure and convenient retreat.

New Providence was visited by Columbus on the 17th of October in the year 1492, and named *Fernandina* in honour of Ferdinand king of Spain*. But so much was the pub-

* The particulars of Columbus's voyage through the Bahamas are related in the next chapter.

lic

lic attention engrossed by the valuable countries to which he afterwards directed his course, that the discovery of the island was attributed to an English navigator (Captain William Sayle), driven there in the year 1667 on his passage to Carolina. From the fortunate preservation which on that or a subsequent voyage he experienced in this island from shipwreck, Captain Sayle was induced to call it Providence. As the same name, however, had been given to a district of country on the coast of our northern settlements in America, this, as the latest discovery, was probably distinguished by the description of *New* * Providence. From the representation which this gentleman made on his return home to the proprietors of Carolina (of which colony he was afterwards Governor), Providence with the other Bahama Islands was granted by Charles II.

* This epithet *New*, however, was perhaps applied to this island to distinguish it from the little island of *Old* Providence, lying west of the Mosquito shore.

to

to the Duke of Albemarle and five other proprietary lords. Shortly after its location some emigrants from England and the other colonies in America having settled, or proposing to form a settlement, on the island, in the year 1672, Mr. Collingworth was sent out to superintend the infant colony at Nassau. Some misunderstanding, however, taking place, he was afterwards seized by the licentious inhabitants (probably for the most part pirates), and transported to Jamaica. Although the proprietary lords some years afterwards sent out a successor to Mr. Collingworth, they do not appear to have made any energetic efforts to repress such audacities in future: but the Spaniards, who were more interested to inflict an exemplary vengeance on a colony which, in the neighbourhood of one of their valuable possessions, committed incessant depredations on its commerce, made frequent and ineffectual attempts to exterminate the settlement at Nassau. From this motive, combined with the

the jealousy they always entertained of the colonization of any other nation in a part of the globe which they considered exclusively as their own, in one of their descents on Nassau, it is said, they actually *roasted* Mr. Clarke the Governor. But the pirates, whose loss of property was easily replaced by the means by which it was originally acquired, were no sooner dispersed than they returned to their favourite asylum: and the only permanent effect produced by these attacks was a more malignant hatred against their invaders, cherished even to this day; for no where in the West-Indies have I remarked that the Spaniards are so much dreaded and detested as in the Bahamas.

In a course of years several Governors were successively appointed; but I have found little either interesting or curious in the detail of their proceedings. On arriving at this remote government, they were either intimidated by the licentious colonists, or suffered with them the vengeance which the cruel

cruel and exasperated Spaniards were invited to inflict on this settlement by the symptoms of its growing prosperity. In the last attack, in the year 1708, the French united with the Spaniards. The negroes were taken off; and the inhabitants, who had secreted themselves in the woods, afterwards retired to Carolina. Previous to this epoch the settlers amounted to about 1000 in number on the islands, and some promising attempts had been made to cultivate provisions, sugar, and tobacco. Mr. Birch, the succeeding Governor, who visited Providence, found it totally uninhabited, and, having encamped for some time in the woods, returned to England.

The pirates, however, who had become at this period more numerous and formidable than ever, finding the place deserted, returned, after their successful voyages, to riot at Nassau in every species of debauchery and excess. The History of their lives* is re-

* Written by Captain Johnson.

plete

plete with those instances of enterprise, ferociousness, and generosity, which characterize the actions of brave, uneducated, and thoughtless men. *Hostes humani generis*, they attacked and plundered the vessels of every nation which they met, without excepting at all their own. At length the impudence and success of one, amongst other notorious leaders, had so much attracted the public attention, that his Majesty King George I., at the solicitation of the merchants of London and Liverpool, was induced to send out a respectable armament under the intrepid navigator Captain Woodes Rogers, with a determination to reduce the colony to obedience. The Governor however did not arrive before the death of John Teach, the noted pirate before alluded to, nicknamed *Black Beard*. As his name is still familiar to the inhabitants of Nassau*, I was

* A person, I believe, now living there, recollects him.

induced

induced to make myself acquainted with his story on this the principal scene of his actions. This extraordinary man had united in his fortunes a desperate and formidable gang of pirates, styling himself their Commodore, and assuming the authority of a legitimate chief. Under a wild fig-tree, the trunk of which still remains, and was shown to me in the eastern part of the town, he used to sit in council amongst his banditti, concerting or promulgating his plans, and exercising the authority of a magistrate. His piracies were often carried on near the English settlements on the coast of North America, where he met with extraordinary success. Perhaps in the history of human depravity it would be difficult to select actions more brutal and extravagant than Black Beard's biographer has recorded of him. As the narrative to which I allude is generally credited, and bears strong internal evidence of truth, it may be amusing to mention a few particulars of

of a man who was for some time considered as sovereign of this island.

In person as well as disposition this desperado, who was a native of England, seems to have been qualified for the chief of a gang of thieves. The effect of his beard, which gave a natural ferocity to his countenance, he was always solicitous to heighten, by suffering it to grow to an immoderate length, and twisting it about in small tails like a Ramillies wig; whence he derived the name of Black Beard. His portrait in time of action is described as that of a complete fury; with three brace of pistols in holsters slung over his shoulders like bandoliers, and lighted matches under his hat, sticking out over each of his ears. All authority as well as admiration amongst the pirates was conferred on those who, committing every outrage on humanity, displayed the greatest audacity and extravagance. Black Beard's pretensions to an elevated rank in the estimation of his associates may be conceived from the character

of his jokes. Having often exhibited himself before them as a dæmon, he determined once to show them a hell of his own creation. For this purpose he collected a quantity of sulphur and combustible materials between the decks of his vessel; when, kindling a flame and shutting down the hatches upon his crew, he involved himself with them literally in fire and brimstone. With oaths and frantic gestures he then acted the part of the devil, as little affected by the smoke as if he had been born in the infernal regions; till his companions, nearly suffocated and fainting, compelled him to release them. His convivial humour was of a similar cast. In one of his ecstasies, whilst heated with liquor and sitting in his cabin, he took a pistol in each hand; then, cocking them under the table, blew out the candles, and, crossing his hands, fired on each side at his companions*:

* One of the guests, who related this anecdote, perceiving what was likely to happen, adroitly took himself off.

one

one of them received a shot which maimed him for life. His gallantry also was of the same complexion as this vein of humour. He had fourteen wives, if they may be so called. But his conduct towards one of them appears to have been too unfeeling and unmanly to admit of description.

The English government, having determined to clear the sea of these ruffians, directed some ships of war to effect that purpose in the early part of last century. Black Beard at that time was lurking in a small vessel in the creeks and shallows of an inlet near Cape Hatteras, in North Carolina. But the chief magistrate of that province having long connived at his robberies, the sufferers gave information to the Governor of Virginia, and the naval force on that station directed to assist in the extermination of the pirates. The intrepidity displayed in this service by a lieutenant of the name of Maynard, at least equal to that of the rover, and

in a better cause, deserves a circumstantial relation.

From the nature of Black Beard's position, in a sloop of little draught of water, on a coast abounding with creeks, and remarkable for the number and intricacy of its shoals, with which he had made himself intimately acquainted, it was deemed impossible to approach him in vessels of any force. Two hired sloops were therefore manned from the Pearl and Lime frigates in the Chesapeak, and put under the command of the gallant officer before named, with instructions to hunt down and destroy this pirate wherever he should be found. On the 17th of November in the year 1718 this force sailed from James River, and in the evening of the 21st came to an inlet in North Carolina, where Black Beard was discovered at a distance lying in wait for his prey. The sudden appearance of an enemy preparing to attack him occasioned some surprise; but his

sloop

sloop mounting several guns, and being manned with twenty-five of his desperate followers, he determined to make a resolute defence; and, having prepared his vessel over night for action, sat down to his bottle, stimulating his spirits to that pitch of phrensy by which only he could rescue himself in a contest for his life. The navigation of the inlet * was so difficult that Maynard's sloops were repeatedly grounded in their approach; and the pirate, with his experience of the soundings, possessed considerable advantage in manœuvring, which enabled him for some time to maintain a running fight. His vessel, however, in her turn having at length grounded, and the close engagement becoming now inevitable, he reserved her guns to pour in a destructive fire on the sloops as they advanced to board him. This he so successfully executed, that twenty-nine men of Maynard's small number were either killed

* Occacocke inlet, a little south of Cape Hatteras.

or

or wounded by the first broadside, and one of the sloops for a time disabled. But notwithstanding this severe loss, the lieutenant persevered in his resolution to grapple with his enemy, or perish in the attempt. Observing that his own sloop, which was still fit for action, drew more water than the pirate's, he ordered all her ballast to be thrown out, and, directing his men to conceal themselves between decks, took the helm in person, and steered directly aboard of his antagonist, who continued inextricably fixed on the shoal. This desperate wretch, previously aware of his danger, and determined never to expiate his crimes in the hands of justice, had posted one of his banditti with a lighted match over his powder magazine to blow up his vessel in the last extremity. Luckily in this design he was disappointed by his own ardour and want of circumspection: for, as Maynard approached, having begun the encounter at close quarters by throwing upon his antagonist a number of hand-grenadoes of his own

own composition, which produced only a thick smoke, and conceiving that from their destructive agency the sloop's deck had been completely cleared, he leaped over her bows, followed by twelve of his men, and advanced upon the lieutenant, who was the only person then in view. But the men instantly springing up to the relief of their commander, who was now furiously beset and in imminent danger of his life, a violent contest ensued. Black Beard, after seeing the greater part of his men destroyed at his side, and receiving himself repeated wounds, at length, stepping back to cock a pistol, fainted with the loss of blood, and expired on the spot. Maynard completed his victory by securing the remainder of these desperate wretches, who were compelled to sue for mercy, and a short respite from a less honourable death at the hands of the executioner.

From this and other successful efforts of the royal navy, as well as his own formidable squadron, Governor Rogers on his arrival

arrival at Providence found very little resistance to his authority. Vane, one of the pirates, who was then in the harbour, after making some show of resistance, set fire to his ship, and retired in a small vessel with about fifty of his men. The rest of the inhabitants cheerfully united in promoting the Governor's views for the interest and defence of the colony, by surrounding the dilapidated fortress with palisadoes, clearing the public roads, and rebuilding the town, which a few years before had been laid waste. Sensible, however, that persons of the description of these colonists would find their most natural and useful occupation on the sea, he encouraged them to adventure in small vessels on trading voyages. Some of them at first discovered a hankering after their old profession, and in one or two instances ran away with their vessels, but were afterwards constrained to return and submit. Many families were now induced to settle at Nassau, and amongst others, for some time, a body of

Germans

Germans from the Palatinate. A council of twelve persons was nominated by the Governor, to assist in the transaction and arrangement of public concerns, and a regular militia was established for the defence of the island. The population of Nassau at this time did not exceed 1000 souls.

After the departure of Governor Rogers, the history of this island affords nothing but the detail of a variety of local disputes and inquietudes under his successors, which have almost uniformly disfigured the earlier annals of our colonial establishments. In the year 1740 Mr. Bruce (in whose memoirs many of the principal facts respecting the colony are mentioned) was sent out as an engineer to fortify the town and harbour of Nassau. But for several succeeding years I have found nothing particularly deserving notice.

During the earlier part of the American war the island was taken by a small force under Commodore Hopkins, and abandoned as untenable.

nable. But it was retaken afterwards in the year 1781 by the Spaniards, assisted by the Americans, and retained during the remainder of the war. But previous to the notification of the treaty, an enterprising young officer, Lieutenant-colonel Deveaux of the South Carolina militia, had undertaken, with a body of about fifty volunteers, to recover the possession of the island, at that time garrisoned by seven hundred Spanish regular troops. He sailed on this desperate attempt in two armed brigantines, commanded by Captains Dowd and Fennell, from St. Augustine in East Florida; and after picking up a few recruits, principally negroes, at Eleuthera and the adjacent island, appeared off the key which forms the harbour of Nassau on the east of the town, towards night. The conquest of a fortified island by so disproportionate a body of men could only be effected by consummate ingenuity and address. The men were landed, without opposition, to the east of Fort Montagu, which guards the entrance of the harbour

bour in that quarter; and so great was the supineness of the garrison, that, when the invaders had reached the ramparts, the sentinel only was awake to defend them. He appeared with a lighted match in his hand, ready to blow up the fortress in case of extremity. But Colonel Deveaux, who headed the attack, before he could recover from his surprise sprang upon him, and, frustrating his intention, made him a prisoner with the sleeping garrison. Having thus easily possessed himself of Fort Montagu, Colonel Deveaux immediately proceeded to the top of the ridge, and took a position in front of the Governor's house in the upper part of the town. Every artifice was used to deceive the Spaniards, both as to the number and description of the enemy they had to contend with. A show of boats was made, continually rowing from the vessels, filled with men, who apparently landed, but in fact concealed themselves by lying down as they returned to the vessels, and afterwards made

made their appearance as a fresh supply of troops proceeding to disembark. Men of straw, it is said, were drest out to increase the apparent number on the heights; and some of the troops, to intimidate the Spaniards, were painted and disguised as their inveterate foes the Indians. One or two galleys in the harbour had been captured; and, trusting to the circumstances in his favour, Colonel Deveaux summoned the Governor to surrender, with a pompous description of his formidable force. Some hesitation being at first discovered, the Colonel seconded his overtures with a well-directed shot at the Governor's house from a field-piece, during his deliberation, which produced an immediate capitulation. The Spanish troops, in laying down their arms, it is said, could not refrain from expressing the utmost mortification and confusion as they surveyed their conquerors, not only so inferior in point of numbers, but ludicrous in their dress and military appearance.

After

After this period, New Providence, being restored to Great Britain, has increased in wealth and consequence; and the proprietary lords have relinquished their title in favour of the crown.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Author proceeds from New Providence—passes the Berry Islands.—Short description of Andros.—Bimini Islands.—Eleuthera and Harbour Islands.—Their discovery and settlement.—The course taken by Columbus through the Bahama Islands.—Abaco.—Great Bahama Islands.—Some account of the aborigines.—The Florida Stream.—Arrival at Charlestown in North America.

On leaving the harbour of Nassau, and proceeding to the westward, the first land which appeared in view, after a night's sail, was the South Bluff on one of the Berry Islands. These uninhabited keys are projected a little to the north of the island of Andros, which lies about ten leagues to the west of New Providence.

Andros, although rocky, and possessing a light soil, has invited some cultivation. In the year

year 1788, 813 acres upon it were cleared, and there were twenty-two white heads of families, and seven planters, with 132 slaves. It is probably the island called *Saomoto* by the Indians, which was denominated *Isabella* by Columbus in honour of the Queen of Spain.

The mahogany of Andros is spoken of as comparatively large, and it is said to abound with the species of pitch pine which I observed at New Providence. At some distance to the westward of the Berry Islands, and east of the Florida Stream, lies a cluster of small islands called the *Bimini*, celebrated amongst the natives for the extraordinary virtue of a fabulous spring, which, it was said, restored old people to youth.—The Spaniards, giving credit to this idle tradition, anxiously went in pursuit of it.

Eleuthera and Harbour Island.—In the same parallel of latitude as Andros, and nearly at an equal distance from Providence,

lies an island known at a very early period in Europe, from the medicinal virtue of a shrub which it produces of the name of eleuthera or ilathera (Croton). The bark of this shrub, possessing less astringency, has been sometimes preferred, in the practice of physic, to the Peruvian bark*. But the island is principally valued for the provisions and fruit, especially pines, which it yields, and from whence the market of Providence is supplied. It was cultivated at a very early period, and considerable settlements were formed there under the government of Captain Woodes Rogers. Many of the proprietors reside on the adjacent island, called Harbour Island;—originally sea-fearing people, who, at first attracted by the convenience of a harbour, in

* It is usually exported in pieces curled or rolled up in short quills. There are two sorts of the Croton which are found in the Bahamas, the Croton Cascarella (or Ricinoides eleagni folio of Catesby) and Croton Eleuteria; which latter, *ex vi termini*, imports the species peculiar to this island.

process

process of time, probably, like the small proprietors in the neighbourhood of Nassau, residing near the harbour which they had before frequented, when tired of the sea bestowed their labour on gardens and provision grounds. But as the soil on Harbour Island was unproductive, they formed their principal plantations on Eleuthera. Hence, at a period of time when the contiguous islands continued uninhabited, or nearly so, previous to the American war, in Eleuthera were settled 119 white heads of families, and in Harbour Island 94; besides about 350 slaves. At the same time 725 acres of land were in cultivation at Eleuthera.

One of these islands, from some white rocks* laid down on the eastern coast, has been sometimes called Alabaster Island. Not having visited either of the islands, I have confined myself to the detail of a few particulars, which I hope will be found as ac-

* *Jefferys's* American Atlas.

curate as the nature of these inquiries will generally admit. I shall not dwell upon other particulars, in which I believe they nearly correspond with the rest of the islands: but having before touched on the first voyage of Columbus, and finding that many of the original names of these islands, from the uncertainty of the descriptions, have been often very much misplaced, I shall attempt, as nearly as possible, to trace the remainder of his course through the Bahamas.

From Port Howe, on the south side of St. Salvador, it is related that Columbus proceeded with seven of the natives, who acted as pilots, to the examination of other islands *in sight* (probably Little St. Salvador and the Keys adjoining); "above a hundred of them," according to the words of Herrera, "appearing plain, green, and inhabited." Suppose, however, what is not impossible, that the Exuma Keys might have been seen by one of his vessels, and here alluded to, the trade-wind would have naturally directed him

in

in an eastern course. No other land can therefore be intended than Eleuthera by the large island which it is said he saw on the 15th, and named *St. Mary of the Conception.* The south part of St. Mary, running east and west, he coasted to its north-western point, on which he landed. The natives flocked in great abundance round Columbus on his arrival at this island; but finding nothing to distinguish their country from that of St. Salvador, he proceeded the next day to the *westward*, and in the evening of the 17th, after ranging along the north-eastern coast of New Providence, came to an anchor without the harbour, near the present situation of the eastern fort. He was deterred from proceeding further by the shallowness of the water, and preferred this position from an Indian town or village on the shore more populous and extensive than any which he had previously seen on the adjacent islands. The natives were apparently of the same nation, and kept up an intercourse with those

on St. Salvador; for on their way from Eleuthera the Spaniards fell in with an inhabitant of the latter island in his canoe, who had been dispatched to communicate intelligence of the arrival of these extraordinary visitors to their neighbours at Providence. Two or three of the presents distributed by Columbus at St. Salvador were found in the canoe, with a provision of Indian bread, water in a gourd, and some of the Eleuthera bark. The navigators described this island as abounding with fresh water, lakes, meadows and groves agreeably interspersed, with hills more elevated than they had seen in the preceding islands. Columbus therefore honoured it with the name of *Fernandina*, after the King of Spain.

He then proceeded to Andros, which he explored, and thence continued his voyage; touched at the *Holy Ghost* Keys, and those named Del Arena, on the edge of the Salt Key Bank, and crossing the Santareen channel which separates them in a west-south-west course,

course, on the 27th of October in the evening arrived off Cuba.

If, by the powerful tendency of a current setting eastward through the Santareen channel, he had been carried on the Florida shore, a circumstance under the influence of a south-east wind not unlikely to have happened, the discovery of the American continent would not then have been contested with him by a quibble, and his illustrious name would have been stamped, as a memento of the glorious discovery, on one half of the habitable globe.

On looking at the map, and observing amongst innumerable keys two large islands which have given their former and present denomination to the rest of the Bahamas, one might naturally have expected them to afford a subject of some interest on the examination. But the *Great Bahama* is absolutely uninhabited, and there seems nothing remarkably flourishing in the circumstances of Abaco,

This

This latter island, called sometimes *Yucaya*, *Lucayœ*, or *Lucayoneque*, lies in a north-westerly direction from ten to fifteen leagues distant from Eleuthera and Harbour Island, and its southern point is situated at about the same distance from *The Berry Islands*. In a topographical view it may be compared with Crooked Island; that part of it described by the name of Lucaya* representing, in its position with respect to the points of the compass, North Crooked Island, Abaco or Lucayoneque, Acklin's Key, and the little islet *La Desconoscida*, near the hole in the rock, forming a southern boundary to the colony like Castle Island. If this part of the colony has not attracted so much attention from the cultivator as the southern islands, it appears to have been much more indebted to the nautical surveyor; and the descriptions in some modern charts will be found, I believe, pretty exact.

* Referring to the description in the American Atlas, by Jefferys.

Little

Little Harbour, on the eastern coast of Abaco, is esteemed one of the best in the Bahamas. With respect to the interior of the islands I have very little to say. Fourteen years ago about two thousand acres had been cleared, and several settlers had established themselves there, who at this period I fear have removed, or are on the point of seeking some more promising region on the immense continent in their vicinity, which, whilst it affords a various choice, encourages a perpetual spirit of emigration.

In a vessel of a small draught of water we were enabled to stand close in with the Great Bahama, and coasted it for some distance to the west of the *Road Rocks* towards *Wood Key*, within a distinct view of the shore. There was not the least appearance of any cultivation on the island; but I could not behold the beautiful and fragrant woods over the white strand, without recurring to the fate of that innocent race of people whose name it bears, but who have long since

since been dragged from their native shores by the merciless ambition and avarice of their European visitors. A passage in Herrera came forcibly to my recollection whilst meditating on the subject, in which he says, that on the first arrival of the Spaniards this unsuspecting but devoted people were never satisfied with looking at them: they knelt down, lifted up their hands and gave thanks to God, inviting one another to admire the *heavenly men.* Twenty years, however, had scarcely elapsed, before these heavenly men found it convenient to transport them, by force or artifice, to dig in the mines of Hispaniola; a measure to which the court of Spain was tempted to give its assent by the plausible suggestion that it would be the most effectual mode of civilizing and instructing them in the christian religion. Upon this pretence 40,000 souls (probably the whole population of the islands) were transported to Hispaniola. So exalted was the opinion which this simple people entertained of their

destroyers,

destroyers, and so strong and universal is the persuasion of the human mind that a destiny awaits it beyond the miseries and disappointments of its present bounded existence, that many of the Lucayans were induced with cheerfulness to abandon their homes, under a persuasion that they should meet in a happier country the spirits of their deceased friends, with whom the Spaniards represented themselves as living in a state of society. As the situation of these islands with respect to each other invited a continual intercourse amongst the inhabitants, who probably subsisted in a great measure on fish, one may justly presume they were principally devoted to a maritime life. Some of their canoes were large enough to carry between forty and fifty persons. Indeed many convincing proofs of their intrepidity and expertness in the water occurred after their transportation to St. Domingo; when, finding the delusion which had been practised to decoy them from their native country, they made every effort to

to regain it. Some few effected their escape, although many were frustrated in the design. Two men and one woman had constructed a raft; and having laid in a stock of Indian corn, and water in gourds, in the hollow of a tree attached to the bottom of the raft, they put to sea, proceeding in a northern course towards New Providence. As might be expected, they were often washed from the deck of their precarious vessel: but being admirable swimmers, and accustomed to struggle with the waves, they regained the raft; and working their way with paddles, they had actually proceeded one hundred and fifty miles on this long and perilous voyage, when, intercepted by a Spanish ship, it was their cruel fortune to be carried back again to the country which they so much detested, and where they were doomed to eternal slavery. There are very few particulars in which the inhabitants of these islands will be found to differ from the natives of Cuba, or of the North American continent whence in all likelihood

lihood they originally emigrated. In person they were of a middle stature, well shaped, but rather fleshy, of an olive colour, with high foreheads, open countenances and regular features. Their hair was black, lank, and thick, sometimes cut short over their ears, and sometimes tied in tresses. They were for the most part naked and their bodies or faces, like those of the North American warriors, were painted generally red, but sometimes black or white. They were totally ignorant of the use of iron; and the only articles of any value discovered amongst them were cotton and gold. Although averse to war, they sometimes found it necessary to arm themselves in self-defence; and on such occasions they made use of javelins pointed with fish-bones. The principal talent they possessed, and which the Spaniards found of value, was their extraordinary expertness in diving, having been probably accustomed to subsist on conchs obtained in this manner in the Bahamas. On this ac-

count they were generally transported by the Spaniards still further south, and employed in the pearl-fishery on the island of Cubagua, on the coast of Cumana in South America. It is said that one hundred and fifty ducats, at that time a large price, were often given at Hispaniola for a diver of the Bahamas. They survived, however, but a few years under the dominion of their oppressors.

From the Great Bahama we followed the course of the Gulph stream, in which although the wind was contrary, accompanied with a heavy swell of the sea, our progress to the northward along the Florida coast was extraordinarily rapid. There is no part of the seas, I believe, in which the navigation is more difficult and deceitful than near the south shore of Florida, where the currents, setting from the westward through the channels of the Bahamas, mingle with that impetuous tide which issues from the Gulph of Mexico. That forty sail of wrecking-vessels, as I before

fore mentioned, should have kept their station at one inlet on this coast, is a pretty convincing proof of the numerous victims continually thrown on its shoals. The well-known American traveller, Charlevoix, many years ago was wrecked in this quarter, and he gives a pretty exact picture of what almost daily occurs. So very fallacious and irresistible are the cross currents and eddies, that it often happens whilst vessels are steering in one course they are carried nearly in an opposite direction; and till the crews behold the breakers, or the wrecking-vessels hovering round them, they can hardly persuade themselves of their desperate situation. It also unfortunately happens that the land is low on the whole extent of this coast, and the trade-wind sets directly upon it. The limits of the Gulph stream, as some intelligent sailors assert, may be almost exactly defined by observations on the temperature of the water. The thermometer, when immersed to a certain depth, denotes a higher temperature

rature than that of the sea on either side of the current; a circumstance which will be naturally expected from a vast body of water flowing continually from the south. Those who frequent these seas are apt to attribute the inconstancy of climate, and flurries of wind, often experienced on the coast of America, to some magic in the Gulph stream; and perhaps a just philosophy will admit that it may have an influence on the atmosphere. It is not improbable that some assistance to navigation may result from a more studious attention to the phænomena it presents.

In a short time we entered the latitude of the variable winds; and a mild breeze from the south-west, which generally prevails through the summer on the American coast, carried us into the bay of Charlestown. The country about this large town is flat and sandy; yet the banks of the rivers present some scenes of singular interest and beauty. I was particularly delighted with the novelty and endless variety of the vegetable productions

tions of nature. But of the many interesting objects which present themselves in this part of North America to the observation of a stranger, it is not my intention to attempt any description, as they do not fall within the limits of my undertaking. Indeed the publication of a late distinguished traveller has left little of any general importance to be added at this moment to what he has written. I cannot say, from the opinions expressed by some respectable inhabitants, that he has always given satisfaction. But it rarely happens that the information of a traveller is as exact as that of many persons resident in the countries he presumes to describe. Hasty impressions are too often received, which time and deliberate inquiry might correct; and the novelty of objects, while it prompts and animates description, is too often unfriendly to that reflection and patient discrimination which alone can render our observations useful. If, with such amongst other disqualifications, the author

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